

Come in from the Cold, Huntsman

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| Characters: | TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Wilbur Soot , Dave Technoblade , Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF) , GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF) , Karl Jacobs , Alexis Quackity , Luke Punz , Grayson Purpled (Video Blogging RPF) , Charlie Slimecicle , Niki Nihachu , Jack Manifold , Hermitcraft Ensemble , Mr Beast Crew , Dream SMP Ensemble , Toby Smith Tubbo , Ranboo (Video Blogging RPF) , amigops - Character , OG mcyts - Character , Cara CaptainPuffy , FoolishGamers , Clay Dream's Sister Drista (Video Blogging RPF) , Badboyhalo - Character , Skeppy - Character , Antfrost (Video Blogging RPF) , Original Characters |
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Come in from the Cold, Huntsman

by [spookyserpent](#)

Summary

The ground beneath Tommy's feet gives way as he watches the chains slam onto their wrists.

Something violently breaks inside him. His breath catches in his lungs and he struggles to keep upright.

"What crimes?" Phil snaps as a muzzle is clipped over Wilbur's mouth and Techno is forced into a reinforced straight-jacket. "Get the fuck off of me!"

A trident is placed under Phil's chin and Tommy can feel his heart shatter.

Or, Tommy is free of the Red Room, only for his past to come knocking, bringing with it more trouble than he could have ever predicted.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

WE'RE BACK BOIS!!!

Also I would like to say: I don't know when I will be posting because I currently have a lot of work to do but I am hoping for once a week ;)

TW// blood and injury, past child abuse, past brainwashing, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

"Niki," Rae breathes into her earpiece. "We're in position. Ready when you are."

Corpse, Tina, Leslie and Sykunno all echo the confirmation and Niki hides the smirk that wants to spill across her face. The rope is digging into her skin where they've tied her to the wooden chair - that's not even locked down so they're truly amateurs - and she's dying for a coffee.

"Oh, Black Widow," the man coos, like she's a spider in a glass jar, something pretty to stare at from a distance, "I thought you'd have more fight to you."

"Maybe she'll perk up when Maksim gets here," another man comments and Niki has to stop the shudder his name gives her.

She's always known her previous Handler has been out in the world. She got out before she could kill him.

She very much regrets that decision.

"I'll shoot him before he can even see you," Corpse promises, darkly and she swallows, comforted that they're here with her.

She tilts her head, spits out blood and asks, in that small, soft voice all of the Widows were taught, "what do you want to know?"

"She talks!" The one at the back crows.

"You know what we want, bitch," the one in front of her spits, walking closer. A fly stumbling into a silken web. "Clara took the recruits to deal with a problem and then you all disappear, only for that British gangster to swoop in and be seen with you all. Tell us where the agents are, Nikita."

She grins, showing bloody teeth. She hasn't heard her name in a long time and now, he's close enough that when she tilts her chin up, he draws closer.

"What do you mean?" She breathes. "The agents are here."

He blinks in confusion and she weaponises the opportunity before her.

She slams her foot down into the man's knee and when he falls forward, she smashes her skull down into his nose. Darting up with her arms still bound, she swipes the legs out from the other man and then flips herself so that the wooden chair smashes onto the first man.

Standing up, the ropes fall from her wrists and she twirls the wood that used to be tied to her arms.

"I'm good here," she says, aloud. "You're up, Leslie."

The man tries to rise as she hears confirmation from the others in her ears. She smacks the wood across his face, his torso, his throat until he crashes back to the ground.

Gunfire erupts below as she drops the wood, walks over to the torture table they'd set up and picks up a scalpel. She throws it straight at the unconscious man's neck and then turns to the first man, who stumbles as he stands.

With a smirk, she charges forward, throwing herself onto his shoulders before flipping them, tightening her thighs until she hears a satisfying crack.

Picking up her high heels, she taps her earpiece and is met with the sound of a familiar voice, singing in that melancholy tone.

"Are you listening to Wil's new song?" She asks and swearing spills into her ear.

"Fucking hell, Niki," Jack hisses. "A bit of warning next time, yeah?"

Niki laughs, rolls her eyes as she slips out of the side door, wiping the blood from her nose. "You didn't answer the question."

"No, I was not listening to that lanky bastard's song!" Jack whines as she laughs harder. "Look, if I buy you McDonalds, you have to promise to never mention this again, yeah?"

"I don't know," she says, briefly pausing to watch the warehouse start to flame. Sykunno clearly got bored. "Tommy would pay-"

"I will double it."

She grins as she approaches the sleek black chair and slides into the passenger side. Jack's humorous expression drops and darkens the minute he sees the blood and she lets him tilt her head to inspect it.

"I'm healing," she says, quietly, patting his hand and scoffs. "They're also very dead."

“Good,” he replies and then brightens. “McDonalds for your silence, ma’am?”

“Get me a McFlurry and then I agree to your terms.”

In all honesty, Tommy’s having a rather boring weekend. Dream and George have travelled to Switzerland to have talks with the United Nations about human trafficking with Puffy and Sam while Sapnap has disappeared to god-knows-where to celebrate some anniversary with Quackity and Karl.

Charlie has been trying to keep the peace at Las Nevadas in Quackity’s absence and Drista has been grounded for spawning in some dynamite for Wilbur, just because he asked. Which has left Tommy mostly stuck at the Syndicate’s base.

Not that he doesn’t like being here.

He’s starting to understand Anchor and Tubbo likes to chat about hacking and Ranboo simply awkwardly stands in the corner, cracking jokes without a care in the world.

He does like hanging out with them. They’re his friends.

But maybe he was a little too eager when Phil called him up to the main meeting room.

This is what Tommy is good at, after all. He’s never really had any patience.

He likes to be useful, likes to be doing something.

So he lurks in the corner of the room, kitted out in Huntsman Spider combat gear. His mask covers the lower half of his face while his hood is thrown over his head.

Phil sits at the head of the table, fingers drumming against his knee as Techno stands at his shoulder, pink hair braided tightly against his skull, figure imposing. Wilbur is sat on his other side, in front of Tommy, legs thrown over the chair, lazing as if they’re not discussing work that Phil’s been trying to deal with for a few weeks.

Borders are tough as it is but with this new gang - power growing rapidly, to the point that Angel of Death Phil had to take their call - it’s becoming an issue. They’re refusing shipments, sending thugs out to lurk where known Syndicate members are seen.

Tommy was there when Wilbur received a phone call from Niki saying that if they didn’t deal with the problem soon, she was shutting her bakery down for a month and taking care of it herself.

He’s thankful she’s away dealing with former Red Room Handlers. He’s smart enough to stay out of range of her wrath.

Which brings Tommy to now, looking over Wilbur’s shoulder to keep his eyes fixed on the gang leader’s face, occasionally glancing to his two bodyguards and single advisor.

If it came down to it, they'd be safe and well. None of them can die - so long as it's not by Tommy's hand - and Tommy and Techno are thoroughly ruthless after the amount of training they do together.

Techno can floor Dream now. The ex-agents are very impressed by his progress.

But that doesn't mean Tommy isn't cautious, careful. He's not cocky - that was beaten out of him a long time ago - and despite being more human than ever before, he is still a Huntsman Spider.

And right now, protecting Phil and his sons' is his mission.

So he listens and stores the information away dutifully all while watching for the slightest hint that one of the men is here for more than just a talk.

He's also here because Wilbur pointed out that the last time they spoke, the men conversed in Romanian, which Wilbur is only just starting to learn.

Sure enough, at a pause in the conversation, the advisor starts muttering in Romanian to the gang leader.

"Boss," he says, quietly, brown eyes darting over their faces. "Being here is already a risk--"

"Their prices are high and yet their security is terrible," the leader replies with a scoff. "Who does this man even think he is? Showing his face so easily, in the pockets of the Heroes. He's a pathetic excuse of a criminal."

"Boss," the advisor hisses. "Making an enemy of the Syndicate is unwise."

He really should listen to his advisor.

Yet the man arrogantly rolls his eyes and Tommy knows he may be powerful but he's foolish, unintelligent.

"Then I shall be unwise," he snaps. "We will continue our plan for the docks--" Tommy straightens, Techno tenses instantly, "--and watch their shit burn."

"Boss," the advisor tries but the man shakes his head, waves him off with rings covering his fingers.

"Angel," the man says in English. "I wish for some time to think over our discussions."

Phil smiles. It's not a friendly smile. "Of course, mate. We'll hash out any problems on Friday, noon."

The man nods and Tommy shifts from the shadows as they rise. He tilts his body, still keeping them in eye-line and whispers in Swedish, "they're planning something at the docks where supposedly they're burning your shit."

Phil nods and Tommy shifts back into the corner. They watch the interaction curiously but when Phil doesn't try and stop them, they leave with one last goodbye.

"Well?" Wilbur asks and Phil looks to Tommy.

"You want to follow them, Toms? You look like you've been itching to do something this entire weekend."

"Phil, you're the best man in fucking existence," Tommy replies, bouncing on his toes. He's not worried they'll get too far. When they entered the base, Tommy slipped out to their car and placed a tracker there.

It pays to be paranoid in this business.

"Have fun, Tommy," Wilbur grins, leans over to ruffle his hair.

"Be safe, Theseus," Techno adds and Tommy smirks as he leaves.

He checks his weaponry as he darts past the staff that know better than to stop him. His knives are all secure as are his throwing stars. He methodically checks the magazines of his guns as he steps into the elevator before pulling out his phone, eyeing the moving dot, heading towards the posher district.

It's getting dark but not dark enough to walk around in public like this so Tommy heads to the Port.

Phil's containers are marked - Bad had showed him when he caught Tommy sitting amongst the dirt, waiting for Wilbur to finish a meeting - and Tommy tries to work out what the gang hope to burn.

It could be drugs, it could be paperwork. It could be anything really but Tommy doesn't understand the burning part.

Sure, arson is fun but Tommy remembers missions where instead of destroying something, he would bring it back to the Room for them to use or sell.

The hair on the back of his neck rises and Tommy immediately climbs up a container, dropping low. He grabs a gun from his thigh holster and waits, a lion ready to pounce.

"I don't understand," someone speaks. It's an American and Tommy shifts ever so slightly to see brown hair and green eyes. There are a few scars across his nose. He holds a phone to his ear. "No, there aren't any guards."

Tommy frowns down at him. He doesn't look to be part of the gang but there's the way he holds himself: the same way Jack holds himself.

He's been trained by some form of a government.

"Grian," the man huffs. "I'm standing surrounded by containers. Nothing out of the ordinary--"

He quickly pulls the phone from his ear and Tommy can just about hear someone down the line shout, “that’s not helpful, Scar!”

Tommy is becoming more and more confused. Who is this random man and why is he here?

He swaps his gun for his phone and types out a quick message. Seconds later, Wilbur replies and Tommy’s eyebrows raise.

The Syndicate have heard of a Grian but not a Scar. Grian works for S.H.I.E.L.D., an organisation within the American government that deals with powered people.

This means, for whatever reason, a government official is standing in front of Tommy.

The man stills and Tommy is throwing himself back before his brain truly catches up. He pauses, keeping his breaths even and his hand on his gun.

A shuffling sound. Then a sigh.

“No, I’m okay, thought I felt someone watching me but maybe I’m just paranoid.” Scar mutters and Tommy exhales in relief. “No. Yes. Okay. Tell X there aren’t any kids here-“

The rest of the words fail to reach Tommy’s ears.

Shakily, he types another message to Brooke. She replies just as quick and Tommy has to fight the fear curling up his throat, being drowned out by crushing relief.

The children are safe. Tommy doesn’t have to go on a killing spree.

He hears the man walk away and he rises to a crouch, following him atop the containers to a car. Scar drives away quickly and Tommy sighs.

He hits speed dial and by the time the phone is at his ear, Phil is answering.

“Yes?”

“We have a problem,” Tommy replies, rattling off the number plate. “It seems your S.H.I.E.L.D. buddies are looking for the children.”

The line goes silent. Tommy waits.

“I assume you’ve-“

“Yep.” Tommy says, jumping from the container, heading back towards the base. “Brooke’s watching them.”

“Good,” Phil breathes. “Right. It seems we’re going to have a discussion with S.H.I.E.L.D..”

Tommy sighs. “I’m pretty sure George has a run-in with them once.”

In fact, he’s heard the name before. They were always involved more than they let on and the Room hated them.

Being a shadow organisation was extremely difficult when another organisation kept trying to direct light towards them.

“We’ll talk more about them when you’re back,” Phil says. “The gang?”

“Live in the posh district,” Tommy replies, shows crunching in the dirt. “I also can’t work out which fucking container they’re after.”

“We have a shipment in a couple of days,” Wilbur speaks, loudly, so that Tommy can hear him. “Maybe they’re after that.”

“Or they don’t even know what they’re burning,” Techno snorts and Tommy grins.

Phil huffs. “Maybe. We’ll keep any eye on the things other there. Get back safely, mate.”

Tommy rolls his eyes. “I’m always safe, Phil.”

They decide, when Tommy gets back, to let Wilbur handle the government situation considering he knows Grian.

According to Techno, Grian tried to infiltrate the Syndicate but before Phil could kill him, he panicked and chirped out his distress. Which is why, Techno and Wilbur came home to find Grian sitting at their dining table, Phil fussing over him.

They have a rocky alliance with S.H.I.E.L.D.. So long as nobody oversteps or involves themselves, there’s no need for unnecessary bloodshed.

Yet here they are, involving themselves. Tommy rolls his eyes and changes out of his combat gear, leaving his phone and weaponry behind.

He then walks with Tubbo, after the boy has finished hacking into some government, to Niki’s Bakery, where Ranboo has been trying to learn the art of delicacies. Without Niki here, he’s been opening it for a couple of hours to keep business flowing and as much as Tommy hates to admit it, Ranboo is good. Not as good as Niki but the food does taste delicious.

They’re not being followed but Tommy’s senses are still going haywire. Tubbo’s chatter is tuned out as he scans their surroundings, hair on the back of his neck rising, fingers twitching for a weapon.

He does have a knife in his boot. Even if Phil wants him to be inconspicuous, to at least pretend to be normal.

Just as they round a corner, a man slips in front of them, hoodie up and gun pointed at their faces. Tubbo freezes, as does Tommy, especially when he notices the safety off and the man’s finger hovering over the trigger.

It’s terrible gun etiquette and Tommy has to resist the urge to school him. If he’s going to be threatened, he’d like for it to be properly.

“Give me your money!” He snaps, accent from New York. He’s probably mid-thirties and there’s a scar at the bottom of his jaw. Dark hair and light eyes, taller than Tubbo but smaller than Tommy. More built than both of them.

This isn’t his first time.

Tommy thinks this is one of the gang members.

“Here,” Tubbo says, reaching into his pocket to grab his wallet.

The man turns to Tommy and he shrugs. “I don’t carry a wallet,” he says at the stare.

“Then give me your phone!” The man snaps, in what Tommy thinks is supposed to be an intimidating tone.

He’s learnt that the quiet ones are normally the confident ones, the most dangerous. This is simply a man getting off on stealing from children. He’s weak.

“Don’t have one,” Tommy replies, resisting the urge to sigh. This is annoying but Phil told him to be good, to try and hide his true nature.

He’s Tommy out here. He doesn’t have to be Theseus.

“What?” The man says, blinking at him as he snatches Tubbo’s wallet from his hands. “What kid doesn’t have a phone?”

“They can track you,” Tommy replies with an eye roll. “I don’t like being tracked.”

“What the-“ The man frowns at him and the hair once again rises on the back of his neck as someone approaches from behind.

Keeping the man in his peripheral, Tommy tilts his head to see another man walk closer. He’s also built, with his hoodie up, but Tommy can spot a snake’s head tattooed on his neck, curling up his cheek.

Tommy doesn’t like to assume things but he guesses it’s a prison tattoo.

He’s not fond of being outnumbered. Especially when there’s a gun at his face and a violent ex-prisoner behind him.

Not if they’re both from the gang Phil is dealing with.

Tubbo is shaking slightly and Tommy has to be calm for him. They’ll probably say some threats and Tommy will have to walk back to the base with Tubbo and let Techno deal with it-

“Two kids,” the other man whistles and Tommy immediately bristles. “Look at ‘em. Aw, they’re both shaking. It’s okay, so long as you do what you’re told, you’re not going to get hurt.”

Tommy nearly snorts at the wording. It's almost like what his Handlers, his teachers would say.

Tommy had listened then because he had no choice not to.

Tommy doesn't have to listen now. Not when he's stronger than these two will ever be. Not when Tubbo looks on the verge of a panic attack, wings fluttering and antennae pressed down on his skull.

"Tubs," Tommy says, slowly, gaining all of their attention. "Do you think Phil will mind?"

Tubbo pauses at that but the other man is the one to speak. "Phil? Is that your dad? Kid, no one is coming to save you--"

Tommy kicks the gun out of the first man's hand, slams his fist into the second man's throat. The man crumbles as Tommy swipes the legs out from under the first man. He curls around the second man, throwing him down to the pavement.

He picks up the gun, and presses it under the first man's jaw, tilting his head up as the second man wheezes and chokes beside him.

"Not a kid now, huh?" He says, mockingly before reaching into the man's pocket and grabbing the wallet. He throws it to Tubbo, who easily plucks it from the air.

"What the fuck?" The other man breathes and Tommy rises, flicks the safety on as he places it in his waistband.

"If I see you again, I'll shoot you in the fucking dick," Tommy says. "Both of you. C'mon Tubs, I'm hungry."

As they round the corner, Tubbo says with a grin, "you're such a badass, Tommy."

"Thanks, Tubbo." He replies with his own large grin. "I know."

Tommy sees their faces on the news later that night, after Techno goes out. Supposedly, the Blood God isn't fond of muggings.

Tommy smiles at the screen.

Toast would say he's extremely smart and intelligent. The Room used him in interrogations because the person could not lie to him, not when with a single touch, he could see their entire past through their memories.

Just like the others, he's survived. Twenty-eight to one.

So Toast, when given the opportunity, leaves the minute he can.

He doesn't want to pretend to be reformed by playing Hero. Nor does he wish to continue being someone's puppet as a Villain or vigilante.

Toast packs up his things and heads to the Maldives. He finds a lovely little villa with a pool and tries to ignore what has happened to him, to all of them.

Toast may be relaxing, but he's not stupid.

Not when he's in town, hunting for dinner and feels eyes on the back of his head.

He hasn't told anyone about his excursion, just Sykunno, and yet the eyes will not leave him.

This isn't Sykunno.

He's not stupid enough to linger without saying hello.

Toast keeps to the crowds, using a lot of the tricks learnt from the Room to get the person to leave. They don't. The eyes stay.

So they're trained, extremely well trained.

He leaves the town, heads for the coast. He'd rather not fight someone amongst so many witnesses.

Once far enough away from the general gaze of the public and tourists, he turns, waiting.

The person is quick to round the corner, brown, short hair and a ballerina's light footsteps. It takes a long while for Toast to recognise the Widow.

"Squaishey?" He asks, head tilting, hand already holding a gun loosely, muzzle pointed down. "I thought you were dead."

Squaishey grins. "No. We were too important."

"We?" He asks and is suddenly aware of the sea at his back. "I didn't think they let Squid out after the whole... incident."

"Oh. Squid's not here." Squaishey says, steps closer. His hand tightens on the gun. "He's a little preoccupied at the moment. I can tell you where he is if you follow me."

"Where to?" Toast asks, because opportunities can appear in the strangest of ways.

"Home," they say, stepping closer and Toast is aiming his gun straight for their forehead without blinking.

Because the only home he's ever known is that of the Red Room.

"I don't have a home," Toast replies, sharply. "I think you should leave."

They tilt their head. "You're out here on your own, Toast. You have no purpose, no reason to wake in the morning. We can give you meaning if you follow me."

“You should leave,” Toast repeats, flicks the safety off of his gun. “Now.”

Sqaishey sighs but doesn't reach for any weapon. They step closer, Toast steps back, finger slipping to the trigger. He knows their power, knows that happiness inducement will have him following after them like a sad puppy if they touch him-

“I suppose we will have to do this the hard way then,” Sqaishey sighs.

Before Toast can even question what they mean, his vision whitens and in seconds, he's standing in a chaotic souk, a Moroccan market. Beside him, Sykunno chats excitedly about trying the food.

There is a gun in his hand and Toast quickly places it back in his waistband. He doesn't want to draw attention here.

Someone claps him on the shoulder and Rae grins at him. “Corpse is being picky again,” she says like it's joke and he smiles when he sees Corpse haggling with a vendor.

“C'mon!” Sykunno grins and Toast blinks as he's led further into the crowd.

“I thought-“ Toast pauses. He can't quite remember how he got here or why he's here.

Everything is blurry at the edges, too saturated and almost like he's standing in honey. He's neither hot nor cold but there is a shake to his hands.

Thinking too hard makes him want to close his eyes and faint.

“Toast?” Corpse asks, in that impossibly deep voice of his. “Are you good?”

Toast nods. “I- yeah.”

“Come on then,” Rae grins and Toast follows without wondering why Corpse is smiling so wide.

Corpse doesn't smile—

Maybe he does. Toast doesn't want to disrupt this happy, light mood.

Sqaishey smiles, one hand gripping Toast's wrist as he blinks hazily. If they focus hard enough, they can see a Moroccan market and three grinning faces.

Their own lips twitch into a grin.

Tapping their earpiece, they say, “Asset secured, sir.”

“Good,” their Handler replies. “We're bringing the car around.”

Sqaishey hums, slowly leads Toast forward. Soon, they can drop the happiness dream flooding Toast's senses when they're back at the facility. There, he won't have to deal with

any unnecessary thoughts anymore.

He will just be Asset.

Like Sqaishey is Asset.

A car pulls up and Sqaishey nudges Toast in, helped by a guard.

They smile all the way home.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

;))

TW// brief mention of gore and body horror, mention of past brainwashing, mention of past child abuse, injury mention, death mention, weaponry, swearing

Grey uses neopronouns and is an OC (hey, Bug) :)

Enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Darien stares down at the silent phone. No calls or texts since one on Christmas and one on New Years Day. Then the contact stopped.

It always stops.

He sighs and can feel Pandora flicker awake at the sound.

“Is everything quite alright?” She asks and he nods. He doesn’t like to tell her about Sam, his little brother. It always makes her sad to hear them fighting.

“Yes,” he says. “I’m trying to think of a containment cell that will hold the Angel.”

It isn’t a total lie.

Ever since he was contacted by S.H.I.E.L.D., he’s been making sure everything is ready. His prison will hold those that the government deem too unsafe to be on the street.

If all else fails, Pandora’s Vault will stand, undefeated and secure.

None of the criminals have ever escaped his prison. They only ever leave in body-bags.

Sam would tell him he’s sick. Darien would roll his eyes: he’s only doing what’s necessary. He is the Warden and while his little brother may fight criminals, he is the one to house them, to make sure they can never hurt anyone ever again.

“I do suppose keeping the Asset so close will be a long-term problem,” Pandora replies in her detached yet soft voice. He hums in response.

Pandora is his greatest creation. Sam can create explosions but Darien can create artificial intelligence.

“We have a muzzle for Morningstar and that numbing agent for the Blood God but the Angel is an issue if the Asset has to leave.”

They have handcuffs, embedded with synthesised blood from Spifey to dampen abilities but some powers are simply too strong. For the prison to be safe, they will need more than handcuffs.

“Well,” Pandora mutters and her voice suddenly takes on a giddy, childlike tone. It makes Darien grin. It reminds him of how Sam used to speak when they were children, when everything was just a game, when he made Sam Nook for him. “A flightless bird cannot escape a cage, can it?”

Darien’s grin widens and he stands. “Pandora, have I told you how much you mean to me?”

She giggles and he picks up his trident.

Time to go inform his worker bees of the news.

Tommy never expected for his life to become this easy.

Sitting in Tubbo and Ranboo’s house, he watches the news channels replay Dream and Techno’s fight from last week.

Ever since Dream - known as Nightmare, which isn’t a Hero name whatsoever, but he found it so funny when Sapnap suggested it that it’s officially his title now - started as a Hero, Techno and him have started this rivalry.

If the Blood God is in an area, Nightmare is quick to show up.

So while their fights may look violent - Techno’s sword swipes and Dream shifting the earth beneath his feet - they’re not hitting too hard.

That’s what a lot of their rivalries are about. The Heroes and Villains may be against each other but they’re friends.

So if Puffy interrupts one of Wilbur’s meetings, if Bad goes against Techno at the Port, if the Heroes face off against the Villains at the local shopping centre: it’s all joking.

The Heroes don’t agree with Phil’s illegal endeavours and Phil likes to be dramatic when it comes to his approach on dealing with a government he doesn’t like.

Supposedly, Techno and Wilbur are having an on-going bet about who can kidnap the most political leaders.

Wilbur’s winning.

There’s also the fact the Heroes have specific routes they have to travel, certain areas to patrol. Phil doesn’t have that problem. He deals with the bad parts of L’Manberg and ensures

the only crime happening is the crime he's allowing.

The risk to life is minimised even if a couple of killers don't end up standing trial.

Not that Tommy would disagree with his methods. That's what he started to do when he couldn't handle just living in L'Manberg anymore. He started to patrol, started to use his skills for good.

His ledger of red, slowly being washed out.

And unlike Dream, who Techno exclusively targets, and George, who no one targets because he's not afraid to pull a gun, Tommy is never targeted because he's seen as neutral grounds. Quackity, Sam and Phil all watch over him and so no one tries anything.

But if the Heroes and Villains are squabbling, Las Nevadas is in the centre, simply watching the chaos unfold.

Quackity continues his deals, both legal and illegal, but this time with his new bodyguard. Sapnap lurks at his shoulder, flames flickering to life on his hands.

Karl patrols, too, only this time as a vigilante. He still spends his time with the Heroes: once friends, always friends. The only noticeable difference is Chronos' suit change and the way the media easily spot him lingering in Las Nevadas.

Las Nevadas has eased Corpse, too. He smiles, now, and Mark has taken up using him for content in his YouTube videos, alongside Ethan. Corpse doesn't show his face - old training dies hard and he's self-conscious about the burns - but Mark's viewers certainly enjoy theorising about Corpse and Ethan.

Both are seen as strange cryptids Mark has picked up, especially when Sean crashes into his videos with a smirk and a katana.

Tommy watches his videos, even if he'll never admit it.

Tommy also never expected to be so interested in the news channels, even if he'll never admit that either.

It's how he stays up-to-date on threats, Villains and Heroes alike. He watches Dream and Techno fight, watches Puffy take on criminals with a simple twitch of her fingers.

It's also how he learns about Pandora's Vault.

"Pandora's Vault... it's a prison, yeah?" He asks, legs thrown over Ranboo's lap as Tubbo sits on the floor with Michael, colouring in a colouring book. On the TV screen before them, the prison is briefly mentioned.

He remembers hearing about it briefly. The information wasn't stored though because he knew he'd never end up in it.

A Russian spy in an American, Supermax prison would never end well. He'd be killed before a trial, or picked up and taken back to Russia considering his powers.

Ranboo hums. "Sam's brother runs it, right?"

Tubbo looks up, crayons tucked behind his ears. "Yeah. Uh... Damien?"

"No, no, no. It wasn't Damien." Ranboo replies, fingers fiddling with his mask. "Darren?"

Tubbo snorts, antennae twitching. "No way in fuck is he called Darren."

They pause and Tommy frowns. "So Sam's brother runs a prison? That-" He looks to the screen, watching as a powered individual seen causing trouble up in New York was arrested by S.H.I.E.L.D., "-imprisons powered people?"

"The Vault houses the worst of the worst." Ranboo replies. "You have to have a really long trial to even be considered going there because the cells are specifically designed for that person's powers."

"And you get no appeal or phone calls or contact with the outside world," Tubbo adds and Tommy meets Michael's curious gaze. He's obviously listening. "Once in, you only leave when you're dead."

"That's why it's not on the news much," Ranboo continues. "The trials are long and by the time the person gets dumped there, the media is bored of it."

Tommy frowns as he watches the man be led away by a taller, broader man with green hair, black eyes with yellow irises. He does look like Sam, an older, harsher version of Sam.

"Darien!" Tubbo shouts, grinning at them as Michael blinks up at him. "That's his name. Bible shit. Darien and Samuel."

Tommy nods, watching the man wearing thick, reinforced cuffs. They look familiar and he studies them until he breathes, "those are power dampeners."

Tubbo nods. "He builds. His power is connected with technology. Have you met Sam Nook?"

Tommy nods, remembering Sam showing him a small, robotic version of Sam that sat in the palm of his hand and acted like Siri or Alexa.

"The Warden built that for Sam when they were kids," Tubbo continues. His wings still. He adds, quietly, "Sam said that was the last good memory he has of his brother."

So family issues, Tommy thinks and has to stop before his mind considers this to be a mission. He doesn't need to hunt a mark, he's safe here.

And then Tommy remembers what Ranboo said earlier. "The worst of the worst," he says. "Could Phil be taken there?"

Tubbo pauses and then looks to Ranboo. Michael has stilled, sensing the mood shift and Tommy grins down at him, nudging Ranboo with his foot.

Michael relaxes slowly and then goes back to colouring.

“I- maybe.” Tubbo says, unsure. He reaches over to pat Michael’s shoulder. “It’s unlikely though because the government aren’t aware of his villainous activities. They know the Angel but they don’t know him. Even then, Phil has enough money and blackmail to keep himself out of there.”

Tommy nods, content in the knowledge Phil can handle himself.

So sure, he double- triple-checks and looks into every single politician to confirm that Phil has some dirt on them all. That’s just Tommy’s way of caring.

Because Tommy does care.

He has a family now, and as he fiddles with the ring on his thumb - the one Dream gave him - he knows that they’ll fight for him like he fights for them.

So Tommy considers all of this and decides to help Phil in other ways.

It’s also how Purpled finds him, kitted out in the Badlands.

“Hey, Theseus.” He calls, even if it’s unnecessary. Tommy sensed him a minute ago. “You look very contemplative. Plotting the end of the world?”

“Fuck off,” Tommy says, flipping him off. “I’m waiting to see if the S.H.I.E.L.D. dickheads come back.”

“I thought you were dealing with that gang? Uh, Pogtopia, isn’t it?” Tommy raises an eyebrow at him. Purpled shrugs, settles beside him. He says, “Vulpes talks about Morningstar. We hear things in Las Nevadas.”

Tommy sighs. “You all wouldn’t survive as assassins.”

Purpled snorts. “You didn’t answer my question.”

Tommy sighs. “They’re still in their mansion and breaking in would take a lot of unnecessary effort. I’m either waiting for those fuckers to come here or for them to meet other members. Tubbo’s hacked their CCTV so I can watch without being there.”

And the convenient tracker Tommy placed under their car to know if and where they move to.

“Ah,” Purpled replies.

Tommy darts a glance to him. “You’re here to check up on me, aren’t you?”

Purpled looks at him and Tommy wonders, briefly, if he's going to be lied to but Purpled just smiles. He doesn't try to dodge or deflect. Tommy has seen Purpled when he's working, knows the look he gets when he's focusing, when he's calculating.

Now, those eyes are simply honest.

"I wanted to make sure you're eating and sleeping," Purpled says, blowing blond strands from his face. "Plus, Q said if anything happens to you when he's not here, there will be hell to pay."

Tommy rolls his eyes. "I'm eating and sleeping. Phil and Sam wouldn't let me get away with it if I didn't."

"Good." Purpled nods. "Still talking to your therapist?"

"Michelle is keeping me sane," Tommy replies. "You?"

"Jonas is great."

Tommy grins and then leans back on his hands, silence enveloping them. It's a comfortable silence, one they've shared when Purpled taught Tommy to count cards and Tommy taught Purpled how to speak Russian.

It's quiet and Tommy is just allowing himself to relax when his ears pick up the sound of tires. He's straightening immediately and Purpled tenses at his side, tilting his head to watch him.

Slowly, Tommy rises to a crouch and Purpled is quick to follow. They walk further back on the container, keeping out of eyesight.

A door slams and Tommy grabs his gun from his holster, eyes and ears focusing on every little sensation. Purpled keeps watching Tommy, clearly waiting for a signal.

Tommy doesn't need to be the Huntsman here but it still awakens, aware of the fact that Tommy isn't just looking out for himself but Purpled. He needs to be wary.

A humming starts up along with footsteps and Tommy pauses, head tilting.

He knows who it is before he darts a glance to check.

Scar is back. Scar, the S.H.I.E.L.D. agent.

"So," Scar says to himself. "If I was a criminal who was trafficking children, where would I hold them?"

He mutters some more and Tommy can hear his teaching in the back of his mind. Observing a mark only goes so far.

He holds a hand up to Purpled, gesturing for him to stay put.

Then, without much thought, he jumps off of the side of the container and leans his body to rest on the metal in full view of Scar.

The gun is away and his mask and hood hide his identity. That doesn't mean he isn't cautious: this is a S.H.I.E.L.D. agent, trained and possibly powerful.

He puts on Sarnap's accent and says, "you know-" Scar snaps around, hand dropping to his waistband, alerting Tommy to a weapon there even if the man doesn't grab anything, "-lurking around the Badlands is a bad idea for a civilian."

"Yeah?" Scar asks, faux relaxing. "Why?"

"The Demon works these areas," Tommy says, remembers when George took him to the Heroes Tower and to the training rooms. Bad, despite his aversion to swearing and his sweet smile, was terrifying there, using his darkness manipulation as if it were an extension of his very soul. "I wouldn't get on the wrong side of him."

"Isn't he a Hero?" Scar asks, still not fully relaxed.

"He used to work for the Syndicate," Tommy says, watching the way Scar twitches at that. "He doesn't seem to care so much about their no-killing code."

Scar nods. "And who might you be?"

"Theseus," Tommy says because that is his vigilante name. "Who are you?"

"Scar," the man replies and Tommy is surprised that he didn't lie and give a fake name. "Which side are you on?"

"My own," Tommy replies with a smirk and Scar's lips quirk. "Why? Who have you pissed off?"

"No one," Scar says and he's relaxing now. "Although I wonder if you have any idea about how I can contact the Syndicate, I have some... inquiries."

Tommy pauses at that. He watches him, the way he stands and notices the way he switches between which leg he favours.

"Do you need to sit down?" Tommy asks, carefully, and the man waves him off.

"I'm good," he says. "I- my muscles aren't as good as they used to be."

Tommy wants to ask but he doesn't. Instead, he says, "I'll speak to a couple of my contacts. Someone can meet you here, same time, in two days?"

Scar smiles at him. It's honest and trusting and Tommy wonders if all S.H.I.E.L.D. agents are like this.

This stupid when it comes to meeting random people.

“Thank you, Theseus.” He says, waves as he walks and Tommy watches for longer than he should, just to see that he makes it to his car safely.

It’s idiotic, to care about a stranger.

It’s more human than Huntsman Spider.

But he is more human than spider these days.

“Purp,” he calls, back in his familiar British accent. “All clear.”

“I gathered,” Purpled says, dropping down beside him. “Are you seriously going to get someone to meet him? Why?”

“He wants the kids,” Tommy says and Purpled freezes. Tommy turns his head, meeting his gaze. “If he thinks we’re being open, he might also open up. Especially when he thinks Phil’s a fucking trafficker.”

Tommy has work to do.

He needs to know who is involved in S.H.I.E.L.D..

He needs to put his skills to good use.

Sean wouldn’t say he’s stupid. Stupid people don’t last in the Red Room, they die quickly.

But he does think a lot of his survival is based on the fact he cannot die. Everything they tested - and they tested a lot, on broken bones and stolen organs and the pain was endless until he grew to simply not feel it - did not work. Some deaths took longer to heal from but he would always heal.

That’s why he was sent to Mr Beast. The Room were curious and sure, his Handler came with him to give reports back to the Room and to keep him semi-compliant but he was the property of Mr Beast.

He remembers missing Felix, remembers goading the scientists he dubbed ‘lab coats’, remembers befriending the voice behind the reinforced cell who called themselves Dark.

And Sean hated it there. At least in the Room, he had things to do, children to train, Felix to laugh around with.

That was until he met Grey.

Grey, with xer grey hair tied into a man-bun and a single antenna, stumps left on their back from cut-off wings. Xe was small and quiet and refused to make eye contact. Xe could rot things, that was xer ability.

And yet, Grey couldn’t kill him.

Grey would rot certain limbs and Sean still healed. He used to joke that it felt like an intense itching sensation but Grey never responded. What was always surprising about Grey was the way xe, too, would flinch at the sight of the lab coats, the guards.

If someone told a young Sean that within three months he'd meet red eyes and find them filled with amusement, a blush to pale cheeks, he would've laughed. But Sean did care for Grey.

Until Dark broke out and the facility was thrown into chaos and Sean remembers his Handler lying there, head rolling away from his body, and took his chance. He tried to escape and in the bloodshed, the thrill of the kill, he remembers cutting into Grey.

After that, he found while back in his cell, that he had killed his friend.

He fought harder and within a week, he was back at the Room.

He could tell Felix knew something was wrong. It was in the set of his shoulders, the new found anger, the sharpness to his humour that wasn't there before.

Felix never asked but he was there.

Until Sean was told to shoot him, after Felix was labelled a traitor.

As much as he likes to disagree with George's version of events, his hand was shaking when he pulled the trigger.

Sean remembers everything of his past. Even if he chooses not to focus on most of it. He is jealous, in all honesty, of the others for having the ability to forget.

His memories haunt him, have twisted his mind into something close to insanity.

So when he jumps the gun to get Mr Beast and ends up in a bar in Latvia, he believes for a split second that he truly is going crazy.

"Hey," Grey says, hand lifting to wriggle fingers at him. Sean's breath lodges in his throat and he nearly smashes the glass in his hand when he drops it back to the bar.

"You're dead," he hisses and Grey rolls those red eyes.

"Really?" Xe drawls, pressing two fingers to the side of xer neck. "Nope. Still got a heartbeat."

Sean shakily stands, nearly trips over his own feet. Grey grins at the sight, even as xe, too, is scanning every inch of Sean.

"How?" He asks and Grey frowns at him.

"What do you mean how? I didn't have any random, unexplained heart attacks when you left-"

“I cut you,” Sean snaps and then lowers his voice when a few people in the bar turn their heads. “I cut you and they told me you were dead.”

Xe frown deepens. “You left me,” Grey accuses, even if xe looks unsure. “You left me and you never said goodbye. They told me you wanted to be transferred-“

“The Red Room never let us do anything,” Sean breathes, pieces of a puzzle clicking together. “They lied to both of us.”

Xe cocks an eyebrow. “I’ve been thinking you’re an asshole for ditching me. So you’re still an asshole.”

“Your asshole,” Sean replies and Grey flushes.

“Fuck off.”

Sean laughs and only then does the situation hit him. Grey is standing before him, and yet they’re in the middle of Latvia. Grey shouldn’t be here.

He takes a step closer. “How did you find me?”

Grey’s eyes flick away from his face and xe starts to fiddle with xer fingers. “Don’t freak out,” xe says and shifts xer jacket, displaying a very real bomb strapped to xer chest. “But this really isn’t a social meeting.”

“What the fuck?” He asks, steps closer, fingers reaching for xem but Grey stumbles back, eyes flicking to the windows.

Sean freezes, Huntsman Spider slipping into place. He scans the bar, hand reaching for the gun in his waistband, or maybe the knives in his boots, up his sleeves.

“Don’t,” Grey whispers, red eyes burning and begging. “Please, Jack.”

Sean swallows, looks to xem. “It’s Sean,” he says. “What the fuck is happening, Grey?”

Grey still won’t meet his eyes. “Someone stopped off at my labs, told me I needed to meet a friend of his. Said his name was Squid and then I met this other person called Stampy-“

“The originals,” Sean whispers and the gravity of the situation hits him. He stands straighter, looking out of the windows as if he’d be able to see anything. “Let me guess, they told you to tell me it’s time to come home?”

Grey blinks. “How did you know that?”

Sean sighs, digs his hands into his hair before dragging them down his face. “Because they’re so fucking predictable. If I try anything or try to leave, they’re going to set that off, aren’t they?”

Grey nods, face solemn, single antenna twitching. “I’m sorry. I’m really fucking sorry.”

“Hey,” Sean says, wanting to reach for xem, wanting to tell xem that everything is going to be alright. Sean cannot die but Grey can and so he will do whatever it takes to ensure xer safety. “I’m cooperating. It’s not your fault. I’m just a little overwhelmed what with you not being dead and all.”

Grey smiles a watery smile. “I’m still sorry.”

“I know,” Sean replies. “When this is over, can I have a hug?”

“You’re an idiot.” Grey replies, walking away. “But yes.”

“Hell yeah!” Sean fist bumps the air as Grey leads him to a police van. There’s more than twenty guards and Sean snorts.

Stampy leans against the van and smiles when he sees Sean. “Ready to go home, Jack?”

“It’s Sean, you overgrown fur-ball.”

Stampy’s smile widens. “Never thought I’d see the day when Jack grows a heart.”

“As if you wouldn’t do this if Sqaishey had a knife to their throat,” Sean replies, eyes narrowing and the smile slips from Stampy’s face.

Silence stretches between them, both evaluating. Sean has made his threat clear. If anything happens to Grey, he won’t hesitate to take it out on the rest of them.

Stampy nods, shoulders relaxing. Sean also lets himself finally twitch, grinning reassuringly at Grey, who’s watching them with a worried gaze.

“Let’s go home,” Stampy says and Grey is ushered forward so Sean has no choice but to follow.

Chapter End Notes

Me, mentioning Pandora’s Vault: hmm, what’s that doing there??? :)

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Niki <3

TW// blood and injury, violence, past brainwashing mention, past child abuse mention, trigger phrases used, implications of rape (none mentioned), murder mention, weaponry, swearing

Milena, Nadezhda and Alexander are OCs ;)

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Alexander wonders if he should mention the American who stopped by the morgue a couple of weeks back. Tall, with red eyes and ram's horns. He had asked about getting to America, told Alexander that he needed a new identity.

Alexander knows the people over by the facility use different accents so he does as he's told.

He pauses as he finishes up with a body. No, he concludes. He shouldn't tell his wife about the strange encounter that's been plaguing him for weeks.

Alexander finishes work at his usual time. He bids a farewell to his colleagues, gets into his car and drives home, wondering what his wife has made him. He ignores all thoughts of the strange American.

He pulls into his driveway, locks the car and enters his home.

Only to find his wife sitting at their dining table before a man. They both look up at him and that's when Alexander notices the twin guns facing one another on his table, muzzles nearly touching.

"Hello, honey," Milena breathes, dark hair pulled back from her face, glasses perched on her nose. "How was work?"

Alexander looks to the man - brown hair and brown eyes, light scruff on his jaw - and back to his wife. "As it usually is," he replies. "Who is this?"

"Jordan," the man introduces, holding out a hand. Alexander shakes it, shocked by the strength behind it. "You can call me Captain, if you want. I'm surprised Milena never mentioned us."

“‘Us’?” Alexander asks and Milena’s soft eyes turn dark as she glares at Jordan.

“You remember the rules,” she hisses and Jordan tilts his head.

“And you forget that your rules mean nothing when he summons you home.”

“All because of the one with the katanas?” She asks, eyes burning. “You have that little scientist to calm him. I have a daughter. She will not grow up as I did.”

“Sean will find a way to free Grey and when he does, he will destroy the base with little hesitation. You can neutralise Grey, you can ensure that our Asset doesn’t go rouge.”

They stare at one another. Alexander looks up at the sound of small footsteps to see his daughter round the corner.

“Mama?” She asks, quietly and Milena turns to her.

“Nadezhda,” Milena says. “Go back to your room.”

“Hello,” Jordan says and Milena’s eyes harden. “Nadia, yes? Would you like to go on an adventure, Nadia, see where your mother was raised?”

Nadezha grins at him. “Yes! Yes! Please, mama!”

Milena meets Alexander’s eyes and he can see their years of marriage crumble before him. Secrets spill from the cracks and he is reminded of the people from the facility that use his morgue.

He thinks of the American with the red eyes and horns.

He looks to his wife and sees a Black Widow.

He wonders if he, too, has been led into a web of lies and is about to be feasted on.

After all, most couplings of Black Widows end in the male’s death.

Tommy doesn’t sleep that night. He sits in Tubbo’s cave - Tubbo hasn’t told him the password to his set of computers but Tommy is an assassin - and hacks into S.H.I.E.L.D..

He finds out that Scar is part of a group within S.H.I.E.L.D.: Strike Team Heta. There are a lot of them. Some are field agents, some are tech analysts.

Tommy does some more hunting, finds pictures of them. Grian, the one Scar spoke to on the phone, has large wings, like a true parrot, that go from red to blue tips.

He makes a mental note of the people he finds before turning to Facebook and Twitter. It doesn’t take long to find individual accounts like Xisuma’s, their Team Leader.

Tommy can’t find the Warden anywhere. Not even Sam’s Twitter is linked to a brother.

So Tommy goes deeper, checking up on medical records. He finds that Darien has never had a medical scan because he messes with the machines and Sam has to permanently wear that gas mask or at least some form of ventilation.

Pure oxygen or too-lengthy exposure can cause him to combust or pass out.

So if Tommy needs to take them down, he needs to remove the gas mask from Sam and try to neutralise Darien before he can get his hands on any technology.

Tommy doesn't want to note that down. Sam and his brother aren't a couple of marks.

(His mind does it anyway.)

Tommy is about to investigate further when he hears footsteps. He pauses briefly until he recognised the long strides of Ranboo.

"Tubbo? I thought you'd-" Ranboo blinks at Tommy. Tommy blinks right back before lifting a hand to wave at him. "Tommy? What're you doing here?"

"Needed some information on those dickheads from S.H.I.E.L.D.," Tommy replies, frowning at him. "I thought you were at home with Tubbo."

"Techno and I train, sometimes," Ranboo says, not meeting his eyes.

Tommy nods. "Cool. If you can use your teleporting, you'll be really difficult to fight."

"Oh? I'll- yeah, hopefully I can be better at it," he says and instead of walking away, he lingers. Tommy watches for a couple of seconds before raising his eyebrows.

Clearly Ranboo is trying to tell him something.

"Boob-boy? Spit it out," Tommy says and Ranboo ducks his head before walking further into Tubbo's cave, closing the door behind him.

Tommy sits up straighter, focusing solely on Ranboo.

He knows he's safe here, knows that Ranboo isn't a threat but he can't stop the instinctive panic rising in his throat. He doesn't like it when there's someone blocking an exit.

"It's about Tubbo," Ranboo breathes, so quietly Tommy has to strain to hear it.

"Okay?" He tries to prompt but the boy continues to shift awkwardly. "Ranboo, I will punch you-"

"If something-" Ranboo interrupts then freezes. He inhales sharply and exhales shakily. He doesn't meet Tommy's eyes. "If something happened, like- like Wilbur-"

Tommy stills. Ranboo loses all colour from his face.

Tommy really feels the need to have a knife in his hand right now. He settles for spinning the ring on his thumb as his wings shift under his skin.

“Ranboo,” he repeats. “Spit it out.”

“If there’s a situation like that again, between Tubbo and I, I want you to- to save Tubbo, okay?” Ranboo finally meets his gaze. “Please. If it’s me and him, choose him. For me. Please.”

Tommy tilts his head. “You’ve thought about this, haven’t you?”

Ranboo nods and Tommy continues to stare at him, waiting to see if he backs out. He doesn’t. He simply stares back.

Tommy sighs, runs a hand through his hair. “Between you and him, you want me to prioritise Tubbo? You know that’s fucked, right, asking me of this?”

“I know,” Ranboo says, yet he still doesn’t walk away or back down. Tommy is impressed. With that attitude, he could’ve been a promising Huntsman. “But you have to promise me. I’m not leaving until you do.”

Tommy raises his eyebrows, a clear challenge. If he wanted to, Ranboo wouldn’t stand a chance.

Ranboo plants his feet, maintains eye-contact.

Tommy sighs, again. “Fine,” he says, not really thinking through what he’s promising. “I’ll protect Tubbo over you. There. Can you kindly fuck off now?”

Ranboo grins at him and nods. “Thank you, Tommy.”

“Yeah, yeah. I’m amazing and fantastic and the Queen would fucking adore me. Piss off.”

Ranboo leaves and Tommy spends a few minutes staring at the wall.

Many thoughts rush through his mind: Sam, Pandora’s Vault that seems to not exist at all in any government files, Tubbo, Ranboo, S.H.I.E.L.D..

Tommy doesn’t know what call he would make if it came down to Tubbo or Ranboo. If he could save one but lose the other, who would he choose?

Ranboo wants it to be Tubbo. Tommy assumes if he asked Tubbo, he’d want it to be Ranboo.

Either way, Tommy would be losing a friend.

He swallows, shutting down his emotions. He has floor plans for the Vault he needs to find and a nest he’s built on Wilbur’s bed to annoy him in the base to sleep in. Henry is there, considering he’s been sleeping there more often than his own flat.

So does what he needs to and then finds Henry and sleeps.

He wakes late afternoon, as the light starts to die, and doesn't understand why.

He sits up, disrupting pillows and blankets and sweaters. Something is wrong, he doesn't know what, but his senses aren't freaking out, they're just more awake than they should be.

He stands, quickly dresses - thankful for the shower he had last night and the fact he's got spare clothes in the base - brushes his teeth and then heads out. He kits himself in his Huntsman gear and nearly slams into Jack.

His eyes are crazed and he's shaking.

"Woah," Tommy says, hands out in front of him. "Watch it, Manifold-"

"Niki pressed her panic button," Jack says in a rush and Tommy's blood runs cold.

"What?" He hisses as Jack starts to run. Tommy follows after him, tapping his weapons and pockets to check that he has everything.

Jack doesn't respond. He hurtles out of the base, Tommy hot on his heels and out towards his car. Tommy follows, barely closely the door as Jack starts to drive.

"Where's Phil?" Tommy asks and Jack shudders as he breathes.

"Phil is with Techno. Wilbur should be with Niki but we can't get ahold of either of them apart from the button." At Tommy's look, Jack continues, "there's a panic button under the counter of her bakery. Techno installed it back when they all thought she was a civilian with a couple of dodgy contacts. Fuck!"

He slams his hands on the steering wheel and Tommy looks to him. "Jack," he says, quietly, "Niki is strong. She's a fucking Black Widow. She can handle herself."

"She pressed the fucking button, Toms," Jack hisses and Tommy nods.

"She did but she's survived this long," Tommy replies, keeping his voice calm.

Jack nods even if his eyes show deep concern. "She'll be fine," he whispers.

"She will." Tommy agrees.

They drive to the bakery, Jack hastily parking and Tommy has to grab him before he runs straight in there.

"Let me-"

"Jack," Tommy hisses, letting the Huntsman bleed through so that he'll stop trying to fight. "Stop. If you charge in there, you could end up dead. Let me scout it out-"

"You're a child," Jack snaps and Tommy rolls his eyes.

“I’ve killed more people than the entire Syndicate has fingers. Stop thinking like her friend and start thinking like a fucking agent.”

When Jack stills, Tommy grabs his gun and shifts closer to the bakery. He sees all of the plants and the door - which is going to be a problem considering the bell - and keeps out of view of the glass.

“-so happy,” someone says in Russian. “Morningstar and Nikita? We’re going back as fucking legends.”

“That’s if she complies,” someone else responds in Russian.

“I’ll kill you,” Niki snarls and Tommy’s eyebrows raise at the anger and the underlying malice.

“Oh, Nikita,” someone breathes and Tommy straightens immediately. “Not when I have your trigger words, sweetheart. You have to do exactly what I say and you know I don’t like this backchat.”

That’s Maksim. That’s Niki’s ex-Handler.

Some shuffling, a hiss and then the sound of laughing.

“Wake-y wake-y, Morningstar,” the first man replies in English. “Sleep well? Oh yes, you can’t talk, can you? Shame.”

Some more hissing and more laughter.

“Oh?” Maksim says. “You don’t need to be so worried about dear Nikita. I’ve always taken good care of her, haven’t I, sweetheart?”

“I will kill you,” Niki reiterates and Tommy doesn’t have to wait to hear the slap. It echoes and he winces, remembering the times he, too, was slapped when he couldn’t contain his mouth.

The Huntsman easily slips over his features and Tommy takes a deep breath.

He grabs a throwing knife and checks his gun. He flicks the safety off, cocks it and moves without thinking.

Slamming the door open, bell chiming his entrance, he clocks Maksim - tall but not as tall as Tommy, yellow teeth and dark eyes - but focuses his effort on the other two.

The knife hits true, straight into Maksim’s chest and he stumbles back, eyes wide as Tommy shoots the other two. One falls immediately. The other puts up a fight.

He collapses into Tommy and he shoots once, twice, thrice into the man’s stomach before pushing him away. He collapses to the ground.

Tommy then levels the gun at Maksim's head. "Sorry about the mess, Niki," Tommy says, looking at her and Wilbur in his peripherals. "You good?"

"I can't move," she hisses and Tommy flicks the handle sticking out of Maksim's chest.

"Free her, wanker," Tommy snaps and Maksim rolls his eyes.

"Huntsman," he greets. "Why would I do that when she'll kill me?"

"Never knew the great Maksim was such a fucking coward," Tommy grins and then flips a blade and throws it at Wilbur.

It lands in the wall and Wilbur is quick to grab it and cut at the zip ties on his wrists and ankles. He rips the gag off and snarls at Maksim, Morningstar's eyes - not Wilbur's - glaring at him behind the jester's mask.

"Free her," he says in that honeyed tone and Maksim is rattling off the trigger phrases to break the previous ones.

"It's a new one," Tommy mutters, looking at her. "We'll get it out of your head."

"Thanks." She smiles at him before it turns sinister. "Morningstar, you might want to leave. This is going to get quite disgusting."

"Before you kill me," Maksim says. "Don't you want to tell Morningstar about his beautiful wife?"

Wilbur stills. Niki freezes. Tommy keeps the gun steady.

"What?" Wilbur asks and Maksim looks at him, eyebrows raised.

"Wilbur, isn't it?" He asks and smiles with those yellow teeth. "After we got the boy from the L'Manberg hospital, the Room kept local. There is a lot of powered individuals here, ever wonder why?"

Tommy realises before Wilbur does. "Kristin," he whispers. "Because of the woman, we're all drawn to Kristin."

Maksim grins. "Well done, Huntsman. Someone has been paying attention."

Tommy pistol-whips him and Maksim's grin widens. "Shut the fuck up."

"So what? Because of Kristin being here, we're more likely to be powerful?" Wilbur asks and Maksim rolls his eyes.

"Wherever a God is, power follows and flows," he states. "Why else do you think L'Manberg is the American capital of Heroes and Villains?"

"Get to the point," Niki snaps. "I want to cut out your tongue."

Maksim looks at her and sighs. “Oh, Nikita. I thought you might have started to remember. Or maybe- maybe you do remember, you just haven’t told him.”

Tommy meets her eyes. They both look confused. Tommy shoves the muzzle harder into Maksim’s temple.

“Speak now or forever hold your piece,” Tommy says and Maksim smiles, a fox’s smile.

“We wanted one of the Syndicate because of their abilities,” he states, calmly, confidently, no hint of a lie whatsoever. “The Angel was too powerful, the Blood God didn’t have any blackmail against him but you, Morningstar, you had a family, didn’t you?”

He tilts his head and Wilbur snarls. “What the fuck are you talking about?”

But Tommy isn’t watching the interaction. His eyes are firmly fixed on the paleness to Niki’s cheeks, the sudden grief and understanding in her eyes.

“As Handlers, we have to know our spider’s kills,” Maksim continues and Tommy’s brain clicks the pieces together. He stills, goes to open his mouth to interrupt Maksim but it’s too late. “Nikita was sent to collect you but your wife got in the way. Firecracker, wasn’t she, Nikita? Left you with that scar across your ribs - such a shame, too...”

The words blur as Tommy keeps his eyes on Wilbur, waiting.

“Wil,” Niki breathes, eyes glassy. “I didn’t know, I swear to you-“

“Don’t.” Wilbur hisses and Tommy straightens.

“Niki, either kill him or I will,” Tommy says, because in a couple of seconds, they’ll have another problem on their hands.

Niki simply tugs Tommy’s blade from Maksim’s chest - after twisting - and hands it to him. Maksim collapses, gurgling as blood spurts from his chest, pours from his mouth.

He writhes by their feet but Tommy doesn’t look away from Wilbur. He instinctively moves away from the door, giving Wilbur an out. He also tucks the bloody knife away, places the gun back in his holster.

“Phil and Tech are going to be here soon,” he says, calmly. “Niki, Jack is waiting outside, why don’t you-“

“Shut up.” Wilbur snaps and Tommy shifts in front of Niki, gently nudging her towards the door. His hands are in front of him, palms up in a surrender gesture.

“Wil,” she breathes in a broken voice and Tommy doesn’t have to look to know she’s trying not to cry.

“What am I going to tell Fundy?” Wilbur says, voice just as broken. He finally looks up and his eyes are that of a burning man. “How can I explain that the woman who goes with him to

his own mother's grave is the same one that fucking killed her because - what? - she was after me, after my family?"

"Wilbur," Tommy says, gaining his attention. "Remember what happened with me at the casino? Niki and I didn't have a choice. None of us did. You have every right to be upset and angry but Niki didn't have a choice."

Tommy keeps stepping back until Niki is at the door. She lingers and he doesn't have to look to know she's distraught.

He wonders if she can remember what it was like. He wonders if her mind is replaying the event of Sally's death, if it was quick or slow.

By the sounds of it, Sally fought to save her family, which means it was slow.

"I'm so sorry," Niki whispers but Wilbur doesn't look. His face is turned away, back too straight and hands shaking.

She stumbles from the bakery and Tommy spares a second to check that Jack has her. She collapses against him and he holds her, eyes wide when they meet Tommy's.

Tommy looks back to Wilbur.

"Did you know?" Wilbur asks, quietly, fiercely.

"No," Tommy replies, honestly.

"Would you have told me if you knew?"

Tommy considers this. "I would've pushed Niki to tell you."

"She was wiped?"

"Obviously," Tommy replies and winces when Wilbur sharply spins to face him. "We were wiped for multiple reasons. Either she shouldn't have known about Sally or she was different when she came back. They didn't like their spiders anything less than perfect."

"Has that- did that happen to you?" Wilbur asks, losing the ice from his voice.

Tommy doesn't look away when he says, "two weeks ago, when I disappeared to spend a night at the Heroes Tower, I remembered-" He swallows. "-killing a little boy."

Wilbur's entire posture softens. "Toms," he whispers and Tommy shakes his head.

"I asked them to- to take it and they did but I am remembering more. We all are." Tommy shrugs, remembers startling awake and blacking out until he found himself in Dream's arms, his hand in his hair as George began to fret around Tommy.

The pain of the remembering still lingers, even as he pushes it down along with the rest of his recovered memories. He doesn't like to think of them.

They are but faces that are forever staining his soul.

That ledger dripping red.

He meets Wilbur's eyes. "Please don't take it out on her," he says, quietly. "You don't blame me for killing you so don't blame her for doing what it took to stay alive."

The hair at the back of Tommy's neck rises and he tilts his head as the door opens, bell chiming. Techno and Phil enter. Techno has his hand on his sword, Phil's wings are out.

"And that's my cue," Tommy mutters and dodges past them, out of the door.

He finds Niki sitting on the curb, Jack beside her, Minx crouched before her.

Minx meets his eyes when he steps up beside Jack. "How is he?"

There's a caring to her Irish accent, not normally heard when referring to Wilbur. Yet they all know what he must be feeling. After all, they've all taken too many lives.

A couple of days after New Years, before Toast vanished, they all sat down with a bottle of vodka and googled conspiracies, watched countless episodes of BuzzFeed Unsolved.

Within a few searches and episodes, the bottle was dry.

"Upset," he replies. "But he'll grieve and then heal. Wil's strong."

"What if he never forgives me?" Niki asks and then pauses. "What if he shouldn't?"

"Niki," Jack says, squeezing her hand. "It's shitty but you survived, okay? I'm sure he's going to be distant--"

"And bloody annoying," Minx mutters.

"-but he will come to terms with it. Just like Fundy will."

"It'll take time," Tommy says and then sighs. "Are you okay?"

"No," Niki replies and then shakily smiles. "Maksim's dead, though. That's a cause of celebration."

"It is," Tommy agrees and then reaches for her. She grabs his hand he smiles at her. "You're going to get through this, Niki. You all are."

"Thank you," she says.

She could mean the contact, or the reassurance. She could mean when he stepped in against Maksim. She could even mean when he put himself between Wilbur and her.

Either way he grins back, squeezes her hand before dropping it.

"You're like my big sister, Niki," he says. "Only I'm allowed to be a little shit to you."

She laughs and Tommy turns to leave, knowing he's brought a smile to her face.

That is until she says, "he said I had a brother that died when he was a recruit."

He freezes, looks over his shoulder. "You trust his word?"

She swallows, leans more on Jack. Minx is the one to answer. "The bastard didn't have any reason to lie about that."

"I'm sorry," he says, awkwardly and she nods.

"He said he was young. He might've--"

They all still and Jack is quick to follow. The unsaid is loud and clear.

Her younger brother could've been in Tommy's class. Tommy could've been the one to kill him.

"We all did what we had to," Minx says, eyes intense. "None of us are fucking at fault because of that."

"You survived the near impossible," Jack adds and Tommy shares a glance with Niki.

"No bad blood?" He asks and she rolls her eyes.

"There never was, I just wanted you to know in case- well, it's stupid but I wondered if any of them looked like me."

Tommy pauses to think. His memories aren't as clear the further he goes back but he doesn't think he remembers any that looked like Niki.

He shakes his head. She nods. Tommy turns to leave again. Minx stops him.

"Have you heard from Sean?" She asks, Irish accent thicker. "It was our drinking night and he didn't show. Corpse and Sykunno can't get ahold of him."

Tommy shakes his head again. "Knowing him, he's out doing something stupid and fucking reckless."

"He can't die," Jack adds. "Right? He's probably fine."

Minx nods but her face does something complicated, like she can't quite believe it. Either way, she waves Tommy off and he leaves.

Sean is reckless but he'll be fine. Tommy has faith that he'll be okay.

Brooke doesn't know why she follows after Tina. Maybe it's the way her mind keeps thinking of the worst case scenarios. Maybe it's the curiosity.

Brooke trusts Tina. She's powerful and has extreme control over her abilities. Brooke has watched as Tina stood outside of a building and used a single pen to pierce a mark's heart.

And Brooke trusts in herself. She's been sent on many missions which were considered impossible. She's lucky. Extremely lucky.

She's had gun's backfire before a bullet could hurt her, she's jumped from planes without a parachute, knowing she's safe.

So following after Tina doesn't make her pause. Brooke trusts her and when Tina mentions that Toast sent her a message, she follows.

Toast is smart but unwilling to participate in their life anymore. Still, if he wants to talk, she's more than happy to hear what he has to say.

Knowing Toast, he's found something out and wants them to do the dirty work. He never was a fan of getting his hands bloodied: he prefers to make others do his bidding, all with a charismatic grin.

Standing in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park, Tina keeps closing her eyes, searching for the metal around her. Brooke stands by her side, watching the few hikers walk past them and disappear into the undergrowth.

"Do you think we'll see a bison?" Brooke asks, idly.

"If we do, I'll send a picture to Gogy," Tina replies, eyes closed, fingers twitching. "He never lets me live it down that he got a picture of that jaguar."

"You're just impatient," Brooke replies and dodges the light punch to her ribs. "George has a sniper's talent to just sit somewhere, silently and still for days."

Tina opens her eyes to turn to Brooke and stick her tongue out before nodding away from them. "Someone's coming. They've got daggers and guns."

"Someone?" Brooke asks and slips her gun from her waistband.

"Multiple, actually." Tina says, frowning. "This isn't Toast, is it?"

"I doubt he'd bring a murder squad with him," Brooke agrees. "You stop the bullets, I'll shoot."

Tina nods, eyes narrowing only to tilt her head a second later. "They've stopped. One is approaching."

Brooke looks into the direction, hearing light footfalls of a ballerina. She waits, gun raised until a Widow appears, cropped brown hair and sweet smile. They stop a few metres away.

Brooke blinks at the sight of Sqaishey.

“Hello, agents,” Sqaishey says. “I would ask if you wish to come home but it’s clear what your opinions on the matter is.”

Before Brooke can even open her mouth to question what’s happening, her vision whitens.

Blinking hastily, she’s standing in Alaska, watching Tina and Leslie throw snowballs at each other. Sykunno is trying to push Corpse down into the snow to make a snow angel while Rae hands out hot chocolate to a grinning Toast.

The image is too saturated. It’s wrong.

It flickers and distorts until she’s back in the National Park, staring at a frozen Tina, her lips pulled into a manic grin. Her eyes are bloodshot as though she is high.

Sqaishey tilts their head and Brooke slips her finger to the trigger. “What’s your power?” They ask and Brooke narrows her eyes.

“What did you do to Tina?”

Sqaishey frowns before their entire face lightens. “Oh! Brooke, isn’t it? Luck. Ah, I understand. You’d think you’d be lucky to not be like your fellow Widow but it’s so much easier if you don’t fight.”

Before Brooke can ask, she’s ducking as a shot rings out. She has a second to clock the bullet now wedged in a tree where her head was before Sqaishey is on her, kicking the gun from her hand.

Brooke is a Black Widow. Twenty-eight to one.

But Sqaishey is older, more experienced and she’s relying on her luck.

But even luck can run out.

Especially when she’s body slammed by another familiar face.

“I had it,” Sqaishey hisses and Dan snorts.

“Yeah, I could see that.”

Brooke chokes as he keeps his arm around her throat, knife pressing against her ribs. Sqaishey tilts her head and Tina begins to walk, smile permanently etched onto her face.

“You have Toast,” Brooke wheezes. “Don’t you?”

Dan hums. “Don’t worry, you’ll be seeing him soon.”

Sqaishey gives her a single grin before she’s being punched harshly to the side of her face.

Unconsciousness lingers and just before she blacks out, Squaishey mutters, “let’s go home.”

Chapter End Notes

They're all disappearing... hmmm...

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

And we're back! Soooooon, soon there will be plot ;)

TW// violence, injury, mention of past brainwashing, mention of child abuse, suicidal ideation, past suicide attempt mentioned, scars, brief mention of self-harm, mention of murder, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Quackity sighs, relaxing further under the hand in his hair. Sapnap snorts softly, warm fingers carding through Quackity's dark locks.

"Yes!" Karl shouts suddenly and Quackity rolls his eyes, shutting them as Sapnap laughs.

"You win again?" He asks and even with his eyes closed, Quackity knows Karl is nodding rapidly.

"I'm on a winning streak, boys!"

"How did you hide you being a gambler for so long?" Quackity muses. "You could've been winning shit at the casino."

"We've been over this," Karl says, leaning over to pat Quackity's cheek. "Gambling is your thing. I'm just a god at winning."

"Considering you've been whining for the past two days, I actually think you're trash, dog water even." Sapnap replies and Quackity reaches up, blindly, to poke Sapnap's chin.

"You're just upset that Tommy won't teach you how to count cards and neither Punz or Purpled will acknowledge your presence."

"C'mon, dude," Sapnap mumbles, but he doesn't stop the motion of his fingers. "Tommy's like Dream: he likes to better than everyone at everything."

Quackity opens his eyes and smiles up at his fiancé. Bathed in Las Vegas sun, Sapnap looks as beautiful as ever and Quackity knows if he turns his head slightly, he'll be able to see the radiant smile and red cheeks of Karl.

They needed this holiday, even if it took a lot of begging and puppy-dog eyes to get Quackity to leave his office.

“What number should I bet on now?” Karl asks, pulling Quackity’s gaze away from Sapnap’s soft grin and dark hair that falls in front of his eyes to Karl’s giddy smile.

“Forty-eight.”

“Ninety-three,” Sapnap says, smile twisting to a smirk.

“Okay, so between those leaves horse fifty-six.” Karl settles on. “Let’s see if I can finally beat Chris.”

“When do we get to meet these gambler buddies of yours?” Sapnap asks and Karl shrugs.

“When do you want to?” Karl looks up from his phone. “I mean, we’ve video called but I’ve already spoken about Q to them. They’ve suggested expanding their betting business.”

Sapnap opens his mouth but Quackity clumsily pushes on his chin. “Shh,” he breathes. “I’m relaxing. Nap first, business later.”

Sapnap laughs and Quackity grins, falling asleep to the sound of their warm chatter.

Tommy soars up, wind in his hair, wind in his feathers. It’s freeing up here, in the blue of the sky. Especially after that therapy session.

Tommy, much like his brothers and the rest of the agents, has scars. His are few and far between considering he never got to the full agent stage of missions.

But Tommy is covered in scars.

He’s just good at hiding them.

So when Michelle asks about his obvious suicidal ideation and the way he passively doesn’t seem to mind if he dies, he replies as honestly as he can. He tells her he’s tried to die before and that Eret’s control stopped that.

Now, he doesn’t want to die.

He has a family, he has friends and he’s free.

But she asks because when he says he tried to die, the gun to his head in his L’Manberg apartment was not the first time.

After the boy with the wings, after Hannah, Tommy couldn’t handle the monster he was becoming.

It was supposed to look like a mission gone wrong.

But Corpse wouldn’t let him die. Not after a brush of his scarred fingers on Tommy’s forehead. Not when Dream saw Tommy on the bathroom floor, a grin to his lips as his blood

poured onto the tiled floor.

Not like it would've killed him. Eret's control was too tight even then.

They told their Handlers during the debrief that the mission had gone wrong, that the scars left over was because of that. Eret had taken one hard look at Tommy's arms and had frowned but there was no punishment.

Apart from the usual wiping that left them all unsure about why Tommy had those scars on his arms. But Tommy always had a faint inkling as to why.

Now, with his memories coming back, he knows for sure.

Michelle had been blatantly concerned but also relieved that he was alive. She expressed how proud she was of him when he told her that he was better now.

He is better now.

The scars are forever etched into his skin but he no longer wants to die. He has a family, a large group of friends.

In the sky, he inhales the clear air, wings beating solidly to keep him in place.

With Phil's gentle coaching, he's been getting better and Tommy's stamina and strength has built up. He's not as confident in his skills as Phil but he trusts himself up here.

Not only is it freeing, it serves a purpose.

Dream and George return today, with Sam and Puffy. His therapy session meant that he would be late to the Tower to see them so, freshly calmed by the sky, he prepares to follow.

Until he hears the crunch of tires over gravel and looks down to see two SUVs pull next to the orphanage.

After all, Tommy doesn't just come to see Michelle. He likes to see the children, to join in with their ballet lessons, to see the way they're healing.

The doors slam open before the cars have time to stop and Tubbo is whistling to him. Tommy freezes before tucking his wings close, plummeting to the ground.

"What?" He immediately asks as he lands, hands outstretched as if to check Tubbo for injuries. "What's wrong?"

"Have you seen the news?" Techno asks and Tommy frowns at him, still gripping Tubbo's shoulders.

"No?" He looks at their washed out faces. "Why? What happened?"

Phil shares a look with Wilbur. Techno rolls his eyes as Ranboo walks to stand closer to Tommy.

“He’s not going to have a mental break,” Techno drawls. “Tommy-“

“Do you want to sit down?” Wilbur interrupts, hitting Techno’s arm.

Tommy’s wings flutter, tightening around him. “Why are you all being weird? What’s happening?”

“You know the presidential candidates are starting to run their campaigns?” Ranboo says, quietly and Tommy nods.

He may not be American but elections are very important for an assassin. Back in Russia, back in the Room, it would be the only information freely given. Knowing the politicians running countries is extremely handy, especially when he could be sent after them.

“Well,” Ranboo continues and then pauses, not making eye contact.

“Phil,” Tommy says, turning to the man. Phil’s wings aren’t out but he can see the shift to his shoulders.

“You might have to see it to believe it,” Phil says and Tubbo grabs Tommy’s wrist - so lightly, as if too much pressure will shatter bone - tugging him towards the orphanage.

They walk through the doors, past boots and coats hanging on the wall. They dip into one of the many living rooms and the few children in there look up as Phil grabs the remote.

He spares Tommy another look before flicking the channels over to the main news one and Tommy’s knees nearly buckle at the sight.

“- and that’s why I’m running for President!” A familiar voice calls and the crowd erupts into cheers but Tommy cannot look away from that face.

Large, ram horns curl around his ears, eyes a strange dark brown as if he’s wearing contacts, in an impeccable suit, no bullet hole in his forehead: it’s Schlatt.

Schlatt, who Tommy killed with a shot to the skull.

Schlatt, who should not be alive.

“Are you okay?” Someone asks in Russian and Tommy snaps his head around to see Shroud watching him curiously.

“I-“ Tommy tries and has to steel himself. Shroud and the others are healing. Tommy can’t unnerve them like this. He will be strong for them, like his brothers were for him. “Just a little confused, I guess. I didn’t expect the Director of the Heroes to be running for presidency.”

Shroud nods, even as his eyes tell Tommy he knows he’s keeping something from him.

“Isn’t it- is he even allowed to do that because of him being affiliated with the Heroes?” Tommy asks, keeping his voice as even as possible, trying to quell the panic building in his

chest.

He looks to Techno, because if he looks at Phil or Wilbur, he's pretty sure he'll start to cry, and Techno shrugs, face as impassive as ever.

"If he's openly campaigning, someone has to have signed off on it."

"Oh," Tommy says and then remembers who's coming home today. "Fuck."

Without another word, he stalks from the orphanage even as his name is shouted behind him. Once his feet are on the gravel, his wings open wide and he jumps.

His wings flap once, twice and then he's in the open air once again. From there, he angles himself towards the Heroes Tower and flies forward, wings flapping and curling as he picks up speed.

One thing he has discovered under Phil's teaching is he's quicker than Phil. With smaller wings and a lankier body, he can flip and spin in the air, dodging Phil with his larger wings.

So he flies though the air, wind in his face, in his hair, arms close by his sides as he soars and plummets.

Within a few minutes, he's landing on the landing pad jutting out from the building, usually used for one of their quinjets (really fancy aircrafts that Tommy has been begging to be shown how to fly - Jack said he'll help go steal one and teach Tommy on the fly, literally). He stalks forward, past the doors and down the flights of stairs.

The Heroes Tower is majestic in the light, with large open spaces and the walls made of glass. It looks professional, even if Tommy knows from experience that the floors dedicated to the bedrooms are softer, lighter, warmer.

He curls his wings into his skin with a shake, heart pounding.

He needs to see Dream because that's Dream's uncle Tommy killed.

It's Dream's uncle that has somehow come back from the dead.

It's Dream's uncle that is running for President.

His mind is running mental laps and so his body reacts quicker when he spots something before him. His heels dig into the plush carpet and he freezes, inches always from slamming full force into someone.

Said someone looks down and Tommy meets the green eyes of Foolish.

He also looks pale, like the news has only just hit his ears. "You've heard?" He asks and Tommy gestures frantically

"I shot him!" He hisses and Foolish's eyes widen.

“Oh,” he mutters. “I mean it was deserved-“

“Dream,” Tommy interrupts and Foolish nods his head to the open doors.

Without asking him further, Tommy stalks forward and dodges Sam’s body to still in front of Dream.

He’s sitting on a couch, George by his side. Drista is floating off the ground, watching the news channel displaying Schlatt’s face with a very bored expression while Puffy rants in the background.

“So Bad is missing and no one told me?” She snaps and Tommy’s eyebrows raise as he drops to a crouch.

“You good?” Tommy asks in Russian and Dream rolls his eyes.

“I didn’t know him,” he says in English, quietly. “And I’m not about to throw you out of a window. Plus, there seems to be more pressing issues.”

“Like?” Tommy asks and George tilts his head to Sam.

Tommy turns to see Foolish with his head on Sam’s shoulder, arms locked around his waist as tiny Sam Nook sits on the iPad in Sam’s hands.

Ponk, appearing from the kitchen says, “Bad has disappeared along with Skeppy and Ant. It seems Schlatt acted when Puffy was out.”

“He’s been acting for a while,” Sam says with a frown. “Puffy? Do you know what Project Insight is?”

Puffy pauses from her rant to shake her head, white hair bouncing with the movement. “No. Why?”

“I can’t access it,” he replies, fingers tapping at the screen. “It says I don’t have the clearance.”

“Use my code.”

“I have.” Sam says, finally looking up, smoke pouring from his mask. Ponk steps in front of him, smiling.

“Breathe before Tommy is the one picking bits and pieces of us off the floor.”

“Sam couldn’t kill me if he tried,” Drista says, popping gum and Tommy snorts.

“Is it me or does Project Insight seem familiar to you?” George mutters in Arabic and Tommy shakes his head.

“Never heard of it,” he replies but Dream’s head is tilting.

“I think I’ve heard you mention it,” Dream mutters. “After that mission. Uh, the one involving that organisation. You know the one.”

They both look at each other blankly and Tommy huffs a laugh. “So you were both wiped over whatever happened on that mission. Good to know.”

Puffy starts another rant while Drista groans. “Can we at least watch something other than Schlatt’s face? This is stupid.”

“Sure,” Sam says and goes for the remote but Foolish easily snatches it from his hands.

“Nope! She’s going to put on-“

“I swear to god, Foolish,” Drista hisses and Dream sighs as Ponk ducks under the iPad to curl against Sam’s chest.

The room they’re in, now that Tommy is calmer since he’s with his brothers, reminds him of the old Belarus Room. Reds and golds, a regal air to the place.

Glass coffee tables and soft couches and the floor to ceiling wall of glass showing off the L’Manberg skyline.

Puffy is still in a red suit and Sam is in his signature green and Tommy has to shake his head off the memories of a place he barely remembers. He thinks he went there once but those memories could be fake for all he knows.

“So,” George says to Tommy as he sits, crossed-legs in front of them. “How have you been?”

“Dealing with this gang that’s messing with Phil,” Tommy replies, leaning back on his hands to look at Sam, Ponk and Foolish upside down. “And also S.H.I.E.L.D.. Have you heard of them? I remember-“

“That’s the thing!” Dream says, snapping his fingers, turning to George. Tommy immediately straightens. “You were sent to get that flash drive.”

George’s eyes spark. “New York. A team of eleven tried to stop me but I took them all out.”

His voice grows quieter as the room falls silent. Tommy looks away from George’s face to see everyone staring at them.

“You took out S.H.I.E.L.D. operatives for a flash drive?” Foolish asks, head titling.

Ponk rolls his eyes, reaches over Sam’s arm - Sam Nook is now nestled on Ponk’s shoulder - and slaps Foolish on the chest. “He’s an assassin, of course he’s killed some people.”

“But S.H.I.E.L.D. don’t forget things like that,” Puffy says, quietly. Her and Sam share a look. Tommy frowns at them.

“They’re after the kids,” he says, gaining their attention. “Scar, part of Strike Team Heta, has been lurking around the Port, trying to find where, as he puts it, the Syndicate have smuggled

them away. Which is all fucking ridiculous ‘cause Phil isn’t that shitty.”

“What?” Dream and George say at the same time and Tommy rolls his eyes.

“I’ve checked up on them. They’re all good.”

“It’s strange for S.H.I.E.L.D. to be involving themselves in the Syndicate’s business.” Sam says and Puffy nods.

“I’m pretty sure they have agreement between them.”

“Well,” George says, remaining as stoic and as calm as ever. “You wanted to know about Project Insight? That’s what was on that flash drive.”

“What?” Sam breathes, smoke getting thicker. “You mean the Red Room was involved?”

“S.H.I.E.L.D. started it and the Room wanted it for some reason, yes.” George replies. “I can’t tell you what for because we weren’t allowed to know things above our station.”

“So Schlatt could be…” Puffy pauses and even Drista’s silence is no longer comfortable.

Is Schlatt working for a branch of Department X? Did Tommy kill him, only for the man to return and destroy this fragile peace they’ve created?

Tommy, not meeting anyone’s eyes, asks, “could it be the Beast’s work? He had access to Sean’s blood and Sean can’t die.”

“But why?” Dream says, sitting forward, green eyes turning calculating. “What’s the point of bringing Schlatt back to life when, by the sounds of it, he’s difficult to control?”

“He is getting everything he wanted,” Sam says, nodding to the screen.

Drista hums. “He did always love the publicity around being the Director of the Heroes Committee. Being the president would be a massive upgrade from that.”

Foolish opens his mouth only for footsteps to sound. Tommy and his brothers immediately tense, a knife appearing from George’s sleeve, but Tommy recognises those footsteps.

He relaxes back on his hands, eyes rolling. Family, he thinks. Not a threat.

He sighs. “Hi, Phil,” he calls.

Phil rounds the corner, followed by the rest of his family, and points at Tommy. “You scared me, you little shit.”

“I shot my brother’s uncle in the forehead and he’s currently on daytime TV talking about becoming the president,” Tommy replies, deadpan. “Where did you think I was going to go?”

“Toms-“ Wilbur says, probably ready to defend his actions, as Tubbo flutters over to Sam, reaching out for Sam Nook.

“Did you not feel it when Schlatt’s emotion control ability left?” George interrupts and Tommy shakes his head.

“On the abilities front, my brain is fucked. With the memories of past missions, I’m remembering other powers and I never really used Schlatt’s power, did I? It was fucking annoying.”

Techno steps forward but George holds up his hand. “You stopped using the ability when we left Russia, yes?”

Tommy frowns. “Yeah, why?”

“Schlatt could’ve been revived right after,” Dream says, eyes flickering to George’s. “Whoever got to him could’ve been there, watching us, waiting.”

“Reassuring,” Phil mutters. “Surely a group of assassins would’ve felt eyes on them.”

All three of them open their mouths to defend themselves, only to pause.

They would have felt it. No one could have got close enough to see. Even with Tommy compromised and the woman dead and Corpse leading Eret to their death, the others were of able body and mind.

Sykunno would’ve felt it in the snow. Rae would’ve sensed their energy.

“They couldn’t have been there,” Dream says, after a moment of silence. “But someone must’ve stumbled upon him.”

“No offence,” Drista says, looking at them with those same green eyes. “But you make the Red Room sound like this dark secret in Russia that every Russian was a part of. You mean to say that someone accidentally found the destroyed remains of a Red Room building surrounded by unmarked graves and decided to choose Schlatt?”

“That morgue man I spoke to said Schlatt could’ve been picked off by wolves,” Puffy adds and Phil frowns at them, face setting into business mode.

“Someone must’ve went there with a purpose,” he says and Wilbur nods.

“It’s what I would’ve done,” he says and when they all turn to him, he holds his hands up. “What? Come on, if I knew about a group of assassins, I would’ve wanted to see what happened. I doubt I would’ve taken Schlatt’s body though. He’s definitely being used for a purpose.”

But that’s the question: what purpose?

That all look to see him talking about peace and unveiling his plans for a safer world. One with a bright future and less chaos.

There’s already talk that it could be a landslide victory if he plays his cards right.

Tommy looks into those murky brown eyes and shivers. He's not afraid, not of Schlatt, but he is afraid of the power possibly lurking behind him.

Sure, they took down the main Red Room, but Department X is still up and running. Dismantling an entire organisation is difficult when it's interwoven with governments and very powerful people.

"We need to speak to the others," George says, in Italian and Dream and Tommy nod.

Unfortunately, they need to cut Sapnap's holiday short.

Minx may not have been the best Black Widow but she is still a Black Widow and when Sean doesn't show for another drinking night, she's more than a little suspicious.

So it seems is Rae, who explains that Sykunno has not received any message from Toast in weeks. It worries Rae and so when Minx says she's going to do a bit of digging, Rae is more than happy to follow.

Minx explains the plan to Niki, who has retreated after the whole Wilbur and Sally debacle. The bakery has closed and she's staying with Jack until she can work up the nerve to look Fundy in the eyes again.

With their Black Widow combat gear on, Minx and Rae head to Russia and try to work out where they could've gone.

"Sean probably got impatient, waiting for February," Rae says as they stand in the middle of Moscow. "He said the Beast Games are held in an old weapons factory, right?"

Minx sighs. "Why do I feel like we're walking into a fucking trap?"

"We probably are," Rae says with a light laugh. She grows serious as they walk, eyes burning. "We owe it to them if it is though."

"If it is," Minx says, mind screaming about how strange it is to be back in her home country. "Who has the type of power to incapacitate Red Room agents?"

Rae's face shutters and the concern bleeds through. "I don't know," she whispers and Minx nods, swallowing down the fear.

They walk to the outskirts of Moscow, stilling to stand amongst old warehouses hidden by snow.

It could be any of them and Minx watches Rae, knowing she can sense energies quicker than she could catch the sound of footprints. But Rae just seems confused.

"There's a lot going on," she informs Minx. "It's a little disorientating."

"Mr Beast had a power dampener, didn't he?" Minx says. "Maybe it's throwing you off."

“I don’t know,” Rae says with a furrow to her brow but before she can say anything more, they’re both snapping straight, spinning around, guns aimed at a lone figure.

“Widows,” the man, and Minx remembers him as Jordan, or as the other originals called him: Sparklez, greets them. “You’ve returned home of your own volition.”

Minx spins, back to back with Rae at the sound of more footsteps behind them. Tall with hair that she remembers used to be blue, stands Dan.

“I wouldn’t put it like that, Sparklez,” Dan says with a small smile. “Not when I have a glock aimed at me face.”

Jordan laughs. “I suppose it doesn’t matter either way. He’ll be happy.”

Dan nods and in unison, they both step closer. “Two for the price of one.”

“Who?” Minx asks, getting ready to use her telekinesis to throw him into the ground. “Who will be happy?”

Jordan laughs again. “I always forget that they never told the younger ones about him.”

“They just had to deal with Eret,” Dan agrees before smiling at Minx. “Don’t worry. You’ll get to meet him soon, once you’re fit for purpose.”

“What the fuck does that mean?” She snaps and Dan’s grin widens before he turns his head.

She opens her mouth to ask what he’s doing when sudden, blinding light erupts behind her. Even with her back turned, it burns and she pulls the trigger as her vision whitens and falls black.

A body slams into hers and she thrashes as multiple hands grab at her, holding her in place.

She can hear a scuffle beside her, hopes that Rae is at least getting a couple of hits in.

That hope dies when it all falls quiet.

“Ow,” Jordan hisses. “She nearly got the upper hand.”

“Did you seriously forget she could control energy?” Dan snorts and Minx struggles harder as she can’t see.

“Shut up and stop playing with your food.”

Without another word, those hands grab her head and slam it into the frozen soil below. It only takes two good slams for unconsciousness to claim her.

Schlatt is back and more of them are disappearing ;)

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

The main lore is in two chapters guys ;)

TW// past brainwashing, past abuse, brief mention of blood, injury and violence, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Corpse isn't considered the best Huntsman Spider even though he has the highest kill count. It's mostly because during his graduation ceremony, he simply touched the older spider and then snapped his neck.

Unlike his other agents, Corpse has never really needed to fight if he doesn't want to. One touch is all it takes for him to win.

But that doesn't mean Corpse is cocky.

He has lost before and he knows he can lose again.

That doesn't mean he backs away from a challenge though and like the other agents, he's loyal to them.

Toast isn't answering Sykunno's calls, Sean hasn't spoken to Minx and now she, too, has gone.

And Corpse has an idea of who is behind this.

It's even more obvious when he steps foot in Belarus and immediately can sense the eyes on him.

He lingers in the open, making it clear he wants to do this in public. There's a brief lapse where he can sense no eyes on him before he's meeting the familiar stare of Stampy.

"Corpse," he greets and Corpse scoffs at the sight of the gloves and scarf hiding as much skin as possible. "You've come home."

Corpse rolls his eyes. "This isn't my home. The only reason I'm here is because it's him, even if that's impossible."

“Ah,” Stampy says with a smirk, shifting back every time Corpse takes a step closer. “Sao Paulo. The hospital fire.”

Corpse narrows his eyes, Stampy’s grin widens.

Corpse remembers feeling the connection flicker, remembers the way it cut off. He knows when someone dies and yet, by the grin on Stampy’s face, he definitely isn’t dead.

“How?” He asks.

“Power-dampener on his wrist,” Stampy replies. “He was going to briefly take it off for you to feel it but there’s always a risk with your ability.”

Corpse huffs a laugh. If he did feel that connection again, he would’ve made him walk off of a roof.

“I’m here to see him,” he says instead of discussing the intricate ways he’s plotting that man’s murder. “And you’re stalling.”

“We’re just checking to see if you brought more agents with you,” he says. “But you’re alone.”

“And you’re waiting for Sqaishey.” Corpse replies because two can play at that game. Still, he doesn’t run or try to fight. “How’d you get Sean without a bloodbath?”

“An old friend of his isn’t as dead as he believed,” Stampy says and Corpse nods before pausing.

“Felix isn’t-?”

“It’s not Felix,” Stampy says and then tilts his head. “Ah. Company is here. Once you’re back home, you can meet Sean again.”

Corpse looks up to see Sqaishey, who’s also kitted out in long sleeves and gloves, a high turtleneck at their throat. Corpse smiles at them and they regard him, suspiciously.

“No fight?” They asks and Corpse rolls his eyes.

“I may be confident in my skills but I can’t take you all on.” He steps closer. Neither step back. “I want to see him.”

His vision whitens and between blinks, he’s standing in his old dormitory shower room, back in the Room, the showers at his back, Reeth standing there with his ribs out and the bloody dead body before them.

Corpse swallows at the sight - strange, that this is his happiest memory but fitting, accurate - and stares at the blood on his hand.

Reeth looks so young here, some baby fat still clings to his cheeks. This is their youth but their innocence has been gone for a long time.

Corpse knows this isn't real. He can feel the other lives flickering in the back of his skull as hands hidden by gloves lead him into a car.

He could snap out of this but Reeth is grinning at him and Corpse doesn't want to lose this.

Even in his delirious state, he smiles at Reeth and says, "I'll be right back."

He's quick and he blinks the white from his eyes and darts a scarred finger to a soft cheek. Squishey reels back, a gasp lodged in their throat and Stampy stills.

Corpse can feel their life thrum between the bond. He blinks again, the only influence being the tightening of their control of happiness over him until he's washed by white again.

He doesn't want to stop them. He just doesn't want to lose this feeling.

"Hellion?" Reeth calls, blood dripping from his ribs.

"Hello," he says with a large smile and lets himself drift in this state of pure, unfiltered happiness.

With Tubbo and George's computer knowledge, it doesn't take long for them to hack into S.H.I.E.L.D.. According to the very few files on hand, Project Insight has been a hidden project for awhile, built mostly in secret.

Only those with the clearance level - or hacking skill - can see what's happening.

"They're Helicarriers," George mutters, head tilting as he stares at the screen.

"Helicarriers?" Ponk blinks at him. "You mean those massive aircraft things in the sky?"

"Three of them," George agrees. "Smaller than the original models."

"That's all well and good, Gogs, but what's the fucking purpose of them?" Tommy asks from where he's sprawled at their feet, arm thrown over his eyes.

"It just says world peace," Tubbo replies and Ranboo makes a low sound.

"Now I'm not saying Schlatt is a bad guy but does world peace include reviving a guy and then putting massive guns on the side of these aircrafts?"

"World peace through mass murder," Wilbur says and then scoffs. "Now, that doesn't sound very Hero-like, does it, Puffy?"

She rolls her eyes, points at him. "I am not my brother."

Wilbur opens his mouth, clearly ready for a fight, when Sam interrupts.

"The last CCTV footage I can get is Skeppy entering the Tower, picking up something from evidence and then leaving. I can't see Ant or Bad anywhere."

“What’d he get?” Drista asks, floating over. “A laptop? That’s boring.”

“That’s Schlatt’s,” Foolish says. “You can see the bump on the side where he dropped it when you scared the shit out of him.”

“He wasn’t paying attention to me,” she huffs and Tommy moves his arm to look at her, eyebrows raised. “Remember that.”

“Duly noted,” he replies with a grin before looking at Sam. “So he stole Schlatt’s laptop. Why the fuck was it in your evidence anyway?”

“He is being investigated for knowing the Red Room while acting as Director,” Puffy replies and then sighs. “I’m going to have to go to D.C., aren’t I?”

“Yes,” Sam says, tips his head back to stare at the ceiling. “I’d rather not come though.”

Ponk huffs a laugh while the others frown at him.

“Why?” Tommy asks and Foolish grins, dropping his head back to Sam’s shoulder.

“Darien and S.H.I.E.L.D. are known to interact,” he says as Sam groans. “If Sam shows up, his brother will follow.”

“He misses you, Sammy,” Ponk laughs. “Maybe if you answered a call from him, he wouldn’t bother you so much.”

“If I answer one call, he thinks we’re fine and we’re not fine,” Sam stresses and the other two laugh.

“Yeah, sure.” Foolish gently knocks his forehead against Sam’s temple. “You love him really.”

Sam rolls his eyes, not replying but Tommy can see the softening of his eyes, the way he tips into Foolish. Sam does care, and even if he cares more about the men wrapped around him like penguins in the freezing winter, he does care about his brother.

Tommy smiles as Ponk detaches enough to reach over and grab the ‘Awesome Dad’ mug for Sam.

This is a strong family unit, built on love.

Tommy wonders, briefly, how different things would’ve been if he had this growing up. If he had a warm mother and a kind father. If he had a funny brother.

Tommy has none of that.

But he does have a family he found, one he made himself.

That’s enough.

“When’s Sap coming?” He asks and Dream checks his phone.

“They’re boarding so they should be here later tonight.”

“Nice,” Tommy says, and then places his arm back over his eyes, letting the sounds of their discussion filter past his ears.

The Helicarriers are going to be a problem but if Puffy is going to see S.H.I.E.L.D. then hopefully some questions should be answered.

Tommy is trying not to think about Schlatt. If he thinks too much about Schlatt, he’s going to have a breakdown.

Schlatt is back. Even though he killed him.

Schlatt is back and so maybe that means the Red Room is active again.

It wouldn’t be a surprise. Tommy knows the Department had other organisations working under it and the originals were rarely at the Room Tommy grew up in.

They were always on missions, always deep undercover. Last he heard, one of them worked for the American government, close to the President.

There was always a rumour that one of the originals was the one who assassinated President JFK.

The thought of the Room has fear curling at his throat and he has to take a few deep breaths to settle himself.

He’s safe here.

He’s Life.

Most of all, he’s Tommy. He’s lived through it before, he’s survived

“You good, boss man?” Tubbo asks and Tommy nods, thankful for the friends he now has.

“I’m hungry,” Wilbur suddenly says before Tommy can answer Tubbo. “Who wants food?”

“Depends where you’re going,” Techno replies and there’s the sound of movement before Wilbur lets out a little hiss. “Hit me again and I will cut out your tongue.”

“Lose all feeling in your hands,” Wilbur breathes in that honeyed tone and Phil sighs.

“Boys! You would think you were both twelve.” Phil sighs. “Stop trying to hit your brother.”

“But dad!” Wilbur groans. “You’re not even looking at me, how?”

“I have good senses, I don’t need my eyes to know you’re being a little shit.”

“I think you’ve been spending too much time around the assassins,” Foolish says and Dream lets out one of his wheezes.

Tommy grins as Ranboo says, “you do realise they’re Villains, right? They commit war crimes on the daily.”

“Phil, tell him to give my feeling back.” Techno snaps.

“Wil,” Phil says and Wilbur laughs.

“Nope.”

Tommy moves his arm, opens his eyes to smile up at Wilbur.

“Big dubs,” he says, “you’ve got to give him his feeling back. How else is he going to carry the fucking takeout?”

Wilbur stares at him as Tubbo flutters over to sit next to Tommy’s head. “Fine,” Wilbur says, honeyed tone back in his voice. “You can feel again, Tech.”

“Thank you,” he says, gratefully. Then his red eyes burn brighter. “Come here!”

Wilbur squeals as Drista lifts herself higher to dodge them. Wilbur skirts around Sam, who simply raises his eyebrows, and flips off Ponk as he laughs.

Tommy puts his arm back over his eyes as he reaches out with his other hand. Tubbo grips it and Tommy smiles as Tubbo fiddles with his ring.

Tommy may be fearful of the future, but for now, he’s safe, surrounded by family.

Calling a meeting doesn’t go the way they planned. Sapnap arrives, just as the night gets dark, and Sykunno and Leslie leave the orphanage to see them but that’s it.

Only six show up.

Tommy watches as Sykunno tries to get ahold of Toast’s burner phone, as Leslie dials Rae’s number, as George tries to contact Tina. None of them answer and Tommy can see the dread reflected on their faces.

“In the span of a month,” Sapnap says, quietly, heat radiating off of him, “everyone has gone?”

“Toast wanted to leave,” Sykunno reminds him. “And Sean always runs off.”

“But if Schlatt is back and the Heroes are dealing with Project Insight then that means they could be with the Department.” George hisses.

“But who is picking them up?” Leslie asks. “Do you know how powerful they have to be to take them back?”

Tommy frowns at them. “What the fuck has happened to us?”

They pause at that because none of them want to admit the truth.

By surrounding themselves with normal people - well, as normal as Heroes and Villains are - they’ve inadvertently become softer, nicer, more open. They don’t check rooftops to see if a sniper is waiting for them. They don’t pause when they feel the prickling sensation of eyes at their back.

They don’t fight like they used to. Nor do they kill with such casualness anymore.

Even George, who is known to be the unforgiving type of Hero still doesn’t go for headshots like he would in missions.

Two weeks ago, Tommy was there to witness George return with a man bleeding out.

“He said I could,” George had said to Puffy and she had raised her eyebrows.

“Tell me what he said to make you think stabbing him was okay.”

“He said, and I quote, ‘what are you going to do, stab me?’” George had replied, in that monotone way that had Dream and Tommy leaning against each other as they laughed.

“So you stabbed him?” Puffy had said as medics rushed over.

George had smiled at her. “Yes.”

They’re no longer the dangerous assassins they once were.

They’re more human than ever.

And look where that’s got them.

They all turn at the crunch of footsteps. Niki appears, coat seeming to be swallowing her whole and there are significant bags under her eyes.

“What happened?” George asks, voice both concerned and angry.

“I killed Sally, Wilbur’s wife.” She says bluntly. “So the grave I’ve been going to with Fundy, Sally’s son, is the grave of a woman I murdered.”

“They’re still not speaking to you?” Tommy asks, wrapping an arm around her shoulders.

She shakes her head. “I understand.”

“But it still hurts,” Leslie finishes and reaches for her. Their hands meet and they squeeze. “We’re here.”

“All of us aren’t,” Sapnap says and dodges the elbow Dream juts out as Sykunno snorts.

“Minx said she was going to find Sean,” Niki says, quietly. “She’s not come back. There’s no contact.”

“We’re dropping like flies,” George hisses and Dream squeezes his shoulder.

“We are but we’re here now to try and work this out.” Dream leans down, smile to his lips, pulling at the scar across his face. “C’mon, Georgie. You’re the smart one, work it out.”

“Stop flirting in front of me,” Sapnap groans, pushing them. “I already miss Karl and Q.”

“Can we stop being fucking weird and talk about the fact we’re all going fucking missing?” Tommy hisses. “God. Sometimes I think I’m the only smart and intelligent and extremely handsome person here.”

Sykunno nods as his brothers roll their eyes and scoff. Leslie and Niki share a glance.

“Of course, Tommy,” Sykunno says and then sighs. “We’ve got to help them.”

Tommy shakes his head. “If they’ve got everyone else, they’ll easily get us. We need you two to watch the kids what with fucking S.H.I.E.L.D. sniffing around.”

“You really think they’ll come for them?” Leslie asks and Tommy nods.

“Fucking certainly.”

Dream stares at the sky. “I’ll go with Puffy to D.C..”

“I’m staying with Karl and Q,” Sapnap says. “Knowing Karl, he’d meet someone after us and let them into our home.”

Niki laughs. “He’s not that bad.”

Sapnap fits her an intense look. “Do you know how many times we lost him in Vegas because he randomly walked off? I swear to god, he’s constantly giving me heart attacks.”

“Guess we’re watching over the kids,” Sykunno says and Leslie smiles.

“It makes sense. I can shift them to Canada while you distract them.”

“Have you told Phil about the escape plans?” George asks and Tommy shakes his head.

“No. Only Leslie knows the full version.”

They all have their own ideas of safe houses and escape plans if it came down to running but with Leslie’s power, she’s the one that can move them more easily.

“And I’ll be keeping that quiet in case more of you disappear,” she says and none of them can disagree with that.

“I’m just going to stay here,” Niki says, pressing closer to Tommy’s side. “Hopefully I can work on my crumbling relationships.”

“Give them like two months of healing and if they’re still being dicks, I’ll punch them.” Tommy mutters and she grins at him, opens her mouth to probably tell him off when more footsteps sound.

Ethan rounds the corner in a dark trench coat. He may be more like Ranboo in not being fully part of their circle, but he’s still a former member of the Red Room.

The effects last, as seen by the way he looks at all of them, eyes darting to waistbands and boots as if he clocking the weaponry hidden.

“Any news on Sean?” Skyunno asks and he shakes his head.

“No but Corpse said if he wasn’t back, I should find George and tell him: Belarus and Billiam,” Ethan says and shrugs. “I know we had the old facility in Belarus but I don’t know what Billiam is.”

George frowns, eyes turning calculating as Dream says, “so they’re in Belarus then?”

“I don’t know,” Ethan replies with another shrug. “He just said if he didn’t return, I had to tell George that. Then he left. And he hasn’t returned.”

“Could this be the originals?” Leslie says and Niki tenses.

“They are more experienced than us,” she replies. “And their powers have been honed to be deadly.”

“I don’t think I’ll be joining you in D.C.,” George says with a frown. “I need to go check a safe house of mine.”

Dream pauses. “Shouldn’t we go together?”

George shakes his head, rolls his eyes. “I’m not going to Belarus or Russia but I know that name. I just don’t know why. He told me back on a mission though so maybe if I go to that place, it’ll trigger a memory.”

Tommy doesn’t know what it is but something about what George says is wrong. It makes him frown, like he’s-

It’s not a lie. They all would’ve picked that up.

It’s more of a half-truth.

They all twitch at the wording, even Ethan, but no one calls him out on it.

“Be safe,” Dream settles on. “Keep me updated.”

George smiles at him, all soft. A smile he only shows to those in his inner circle. “Always.”

““Till the end of the line?” Sapnap asks and all three of them nod in response as the others watch.

They’re brothers. They’ll always have each other’s backs.

“Well,” Ethan says, clapping his hands. “I’m tired and Mark has me filming this weird video tomorrow so... night!”

They watch Ethan leave and only one emotion sits in Tommy’s stomach as he turns to face the remaining agents.

Dread.

Tchaikovsky plays as the ballet dancers rise en pointe and fall, perfectly in sync. They even seem to breathe as one, movements so fluid it looks more like water flowing than individual people dancing.

“Again,” the instructor says, even if it is unnecessary. They will dance until they drop. Only then, will they rise and continue until their feet bleed and they collapse with exhaustion.

He watches from the door, resting against it, looking for any mistake.

There are none.

He’s impressed.

“How many are left?” He asks in Russian.

“Seven, sir,” Toast replies from his side. “Nine if you count the early defectors.”

“The boy and the rib creature,” he replies and Toast nods.

“Yes, sir.”

He tilts his head and smiles at his Assets. They will be better and stronger under his guidance. They will change the world.

Light footsteps sound beside him and he turns to see Hannah grin at him, the red of her eyes burning, the red of her veins under washed-out, grey skin.

“You can see it, can’t you?” She says. “You know they are destined for greatness.”

“We all are,” Billiam replies and her smile widens.

“Once Schlatt has control of S.H.I.E.L.D. and America, and Tommy is lured here, the Egg can finally feast on this planet.”

“And we’ll be the Gods of the new one it creates,” he replies and continues to watch the rise and fall of their intricate dance.

Chapter End Notes

It's all coming together...

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

The angst begins :)

TW// violence, past brainwashing, past abuse, blood and injury, implied kidnapping, mention of murder and death, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George stops off at his Kiev safe house in Ukraine before, reluctantly, driving to Gomel in Belarus.

He looks to his thumb, empty of the ring Dream gave him. The last thing he did before leaving was placing the ring on Tommy's counter, knowing Tommy would find it when Dream was too far away to do anything, knowing he would understand the meaning behind it.

George has never met Billiam but he has heard of him, because he was there when Corpse returned, half of his face scarred from burning.

He had tried to kill the man that set the missions, that sat alongside Eret at meetings, that watched them with a smile as they trained, while under the guise of a mission.

Corpse had grinned, teeth bloody and eyes wild. "He's dead," he had hissed. "I killed him."

George had kept that with him for years, respecting Corpse from afar.

Because George had seen the potential in Corpse from the day he had killed a guard when his friend, Reeth, or between known today as Ethan - not as deceased as they believed - was shot in the courtyard. Corpse was smart and yet he had the ability to blend into the background.

George has a feeling he knows what he's going to find when he goes to Belarus. He has a feeling he's not going to like it.

But he can't have Dream go there, nor can he have Sapnap and Tommy follow.

In the boot, or as the American's say trunk, of his car, his sniper rifle sits.

George looks to his thumb, empty of the ring, and knows he has to try and end this before the people he loves get hurt.

Quackity is more than a little unsure as to what is truly going on.

Schlatt is running for President. S.H.I.E.L.D. think Phil is a human trafficker. The Red Room agents are disappearing with every passing day.

And through it all, Las Nevadas stands.

“Are you okay, Quackity of Las Nevadas?” Charlie says, glasses slipping down his nose as he grins at him.

“Yeah,” he says, even if it’s forced. “Everything is just a fucking lot right now.”

“Don’t worry,” Punz says. “We have Las Nevadas under control for you.”

“Plus, Tommy knows how to count cards now so if you need another helper, he can show up,” Purpled adds, checking his nails.

Quackity grins, happy to hear Tommy is still very much invested in Las Nevadas, and turns, waiting for Fundy to add his own piece. Sure, he’s a Hero on the weekdays but he does run the local ice cream parlour in Las Nevadas.

Yet the man looks tired, as though he’s in mourning. His eyes are empty and lost, his face pale.

“Are you okay, Fundy?”

He looks up at his name but no emotion flickers across his face. “Haven’t you heard?” He asks, voice scarily monotone.

“No?”

Fundy stares at Quackity, eyes as deep and empty as a void. “Niki killed Sally. To get to Wilbur.”

Quackity’s eyebrows rise. “Oh. Holy fucking shit. What?”

Fundy just nods. “Yeah.”

“That’s fucking rough,” Quackity says, unsure how to comfort the man before him. “This was when she was a Black Widow?”

Fundy nods again and Quackity thinks it over.

They’ve all heard what it was like, from Tommy, from the others. Sapnap has told Quackity and Karl firsthand his experiences with simply trying to survive.

“Whatever she did,” Quackity says, softly, “it wasn’t her.”

“I know,” Fundy says with a dejected sigh. “She still killed my mum.”

Quackity nods, stands and makes his way over to the man. He rests his hand on his shoulder and Fundy gives him a sad smile.

“Take as much time as you need,” he says and then turns to Charlie.

“What’s our numbers looking like?”

Las Nevadas is still standing.

It’s still standing a week later when Sapnap enters his office to ask, “have you seen Karl anywhere?”

Quackity looks up from the printed photos of a client who’s about to find out what happens when someone tries to double-cross him. “Hm? Karl? Nope, why?”

Sapnap frowns. “You know he said he was going to meet Chris today? He hasn’t answered his phone and he’s turned his tracker off.”

“Tracker?” Quackity asks, trying not to instantly panic at the thought of Karl going missing.

“The one on your phones?” Sapnap says and at Quackity’s blank stare, he rolls his dark eyes. “Every phone has one built in, it’s why we don’t carry them.”

“You track us, Sap? How scandalous.”

“Shut up,” Sapnap says with a very affectionate and fond eye roll. “Karl?”

“He’s driving out of L’Manberg right? Because Chris was flying over.”

It doesn’t take long for Quackity to find the CCTV of the particular café on his computer. He recommended that café for a reason: he’s friends with the owner.

He sees Karl enter, look around before beelining straight towards a person, who must be Chris, in a blind spot. Quackity can’t see anything about him, other than the baseball cap over his head and the jacket over his shoulders.

Two minutes later, Karl is disappearing from the camera, away from his parked car.

“Can you find any other cameras?” Sapnap asks, accent slipping ever so slightly.

“No,” Quackity breathes, panic flooding his veins. “No, but Phil might be able to.”

Ten minutes later, and a few speeding fines he will end up not paying, they storm into the Synicate’s Base.

Hbomb, Phil’s assistant, greets them at the warehouse and allows them entry. Phil meets them in the lobby, Tommy at his shoulder and he asks something in quick Russian that has Sapnap rapidly shaking his head. “George checked in with Dream yesterday,” he says in English, accent fully Russian. “Dream is still on his way to D.C.”

“Good,” Tommy says, not shying away from the hand Phil has on the back of his neck as they walk from the lobby towards Tubbo’s cave.

When they get there, Tubbo is already typing away, screens showcasing multiple angles from surrounding CCTV cameras. None show Chris. He’s always out of sight.

Tommy and Sapnap share a look. “He’s a professional,” Sapnap breathes and Quackity flinches.

“What?”

“He wouldn’t know how to dodge them like this,” Tommy adds.

“Fuck,” Sapnap hisses, dropping his face to his hands and Tommy reaches for him.

“If it’s them, they have a reason for taking him, so he’s still alive.”

“With them, being dead is a better alternative,” Sapnap hisses and Tommy doesn’t immediately disagree.

“You can’t go to Russia,” Tommy says, quietly, calmly. “You’ll go missing and if you go missing, I’ll have to come and get you and I don’t think I can take on all of them alone.”

“We’re talking about the Red Room, right?” Quackity asks, mind running mental laps. “How the fuck is that still running?”

Tommy and Sapnap share another look. Sapnap is the one that answers him. “The Red Room is an organisation under Department X. We think the agents are being targeted. It’s why George fucked off to decode Corpse’s cryptid message.”

“But Karl could be-“

Quackity can’t say it. He can’t. He will cry and sob and scream because Sapnap has been brutally honest in what his life was like.

Strict times and stricter punishments and days of starving and hurting and killing.

Karl can’t survive that. He’s not trained to. Karl is trusting and loving and Quackity can’t imagine him trying to actively hurt another person.

And if he can’t pull that trigger, they will kill him.

The Red Room only keeps the useful ones.

“But why would the Room want Karl?” Tubbo asks, fingers tapping away to shift the camera angles, trying to find where they went. “They’re hunting former agents, right? Karl isn’t exactly a killer, is he?”

Quackity watches the way Tommy opens his mouth to retort, only to freeze. After a brief moment of thought, he looks to Sapnap.

“Do you think it’s-?”

Sapnap swallows. “It makes more sense if it is.”

“Okay, what the fuck are you two talking about because I don’t have fucking psychic powers, do I?” Quackity spits and they both turn to him.

“Some of us have been planning to go to Moscow for the Final Games,” Sapnap says. “Mr Beast, the owner, holds them: he grabs normal people from the street, makes them participate in a series of dangerous games and the winners get to be the ones they experiment on.”

Quackity can feel the colour rush from his face as his vision swims. He’s lightheaded and his hands have started to shake.

“That’s what-“ He swallows. “Karl can’t win. You know he can’t kill people. He’s not like us.”

Because Quackity may not be Sapnap, a trained assassin, but he is vicious.

And back when Las Nevadas was becoming more known, Quackity had to make some hard decisions. He never shied away from the blood then, he doubt he will now.

But Karl is good and kind and bright.

Karl isn’t a killer.

“You’d be surprised what people will do to survive,” Phil says, quietly and Tommy nods before narrowing his eyes.

“You can’t go,” he snaps to Sapnap and the man sighs.

“I’m not going to,” Sapnap says but Tommy doesn’t lose the look of distrust. “Quackity and I will round up some resources. Phil-“

“More than happy to help, mate,” he says. “If you need people or weapons, the Syndicate can spare.”

Sapnap reaches for Tommy and the boy allows himself to curl into the embrace. “I’m not going to be stupid and run straight in there.”

“If you do,” Tommy hisses into his shoulder. “I will follow and I’m going to fucking stab you.”

Sapnap snorts and turns to Quackity. “I don’t know the floor plan of the place but Niki does from what Sean has told her. We can also talk to Mark.”

“Mark?” Tubbo looks up. “What does a YouTuber know?”

Sapnap looks to Tommy, surprised, but the boy rolls his eyes. “It wasn’t my shit to say.”

“Mark came from the Beast lab,” Sapnap says and Quackity’s eyebrows shoot up, tugging at the scar over his eye. “Survived the games and became Dark. That’s how Sean and him met.”

“Everyone knows everyone,” Quackity mutters under his breath before meeting Sapnap’s eyes, knowing he would never lie to him. “Karl is still alive if this Beast guy has him? It’s a shit name by the way.”

“That’s what I’m saying!” Tommy crows and high-fives Tubbo with a grin.

Sapnap grabs the back of Quackity’s neck, the pressure and warmth grounding. “They want something from him or he would’ve already been dead.”

Phil winces. “That’s both reassuring and somehow not.”

Tubbo rolls his eyes, pats Sapnap’s arm. “They’re all emotionally stunted, it’s okay. Progress!”

Quackity breathes out a laugh. “Karl is alive,” he repeats and Sapnap nods.

“He is. Let’s go see what Niki and Mark know.”

It’s nearing one in the morning when Quackity passes out on his desk, hearing Niki, Mark and Sapnap’s voices blur as his head hits the wood.

When he wakes, a full twelve hours later in his bed (thank Sapnap for saving him from a crick in his neck) to Charlie knocking on his door, informing him that Niki is waiting in his office to discuss more, he realises his apartment is shockingly silent.

Dread pools in his stomach as he searches, only to find no trace of Sapnap left. His get-away bag, hidden at the bottom of their closet, is gone, along with the gun stored in his bedside table.

He finds the note on his kitchen counter, sprawled in Sapnap’s messy handwriting and two rings beside it. One from Quackity in honour of their proposal, the other from Dream. He picks up his phone, hand shaking as he dials a familiar number.

“Q?” Wilbur answers after three rings. “If this is to say you’ve stolen another-“

“Put Tommy on the phone,” he hisses, voice hoarse and strained.

There’s a pause and then, “okay. Toms! Q wants you.”

Not even a second passes before Tommy answers. “He’s gone, hasn’t he?” He asks, subdued.

“The note says he loves me and- and he’s sorry but this- this is the safest way. What the fuck? What the fuck does he mean, Tommy?” Quackity breathes, Charlie watching him with wide eyes.

“He’s reducing the risk,” Tommy replies, quietly, slowly. “He can’t lose both of you.”

“But I can?” He snaps. “I have to lose both of them! How is that fucking fair?”

“When it comes to the Red Room,” Tommy whispers, “nothing is fair.”

Quackity doesn't remember dropping the phone. He doesn't remember how he ends up on the tiled floor of his kitchen, Charlie holding him, rocking him back and forth as he sobs.

He just remembers the pain of knowing the two people he loves most in the world are gone.

One on a suicidal mission to get the other.

In that moment, he truly understands heartbreak because he can hear his heart shatter.

George sits atop a building, facing the old Room's courtyard.

The rifle is steady in his hands, eyes locked on the sight as he waits. He is a sniper, he can wait for days if need be.

He does not need to.

Within an hour, he catches his first glimpse of Billiam. Rosewood hair and tusks jutting from his lips, red eyes scanning the courtyard as a young girl walks before him, turning to where George is hidden.

He freezes for a split second as, impossibly, their eyes meet. Dark brown clashing with dark red.

George's finger slips to the trigger.

He pulls it.

A second later, Billiam reels back and collapses, the hair on the back of George's neck rises. He grabs his rifle and rolls, firing without looking.

The person falls - George's power is his uncanny ability to always hit his targets - but another soon follows and George fires again, and again, and again-

Bright light floods his eyes before he can even move and hands grab him - he's pretty sure he's up against Jordan, who can control light, and Dan, who can clone himself - and George-

George's mind flips the switch to Huntsman Spider immediately.

The knife slides from his sleeve into his palm and he cuts and jabs, blindly. Everything is white but he knows instinctively that he's hitting his targets as the hands ebb and flow until an arm locks around his throat.

He struggles but the person is stronger. Especially when more hands hold him in place until blackness floods his vision.

The knife clatters to the rooftop and George is carried back home.

Grian watches as Xisuma introduces himself to the Captain and her children. She asks him to call her Puffy as Scott, the Director of S.H.I.E.L.D. appears, explaining he has no idea what Schlatt is up to.

One of her sons, the one with the scar across his face raises his eyebrows and simply says, “Project Insight.”

Grian and the other Hermits assembled to watch the arrival wince. That’s supposed to be classified information.

But Xisuma just gestures to a conference room, calm smile on his face.

The son that spoke regards them all carefully, eyes flickering to exits and faces and back to Xisuma. He’s relaxed, but a lot more trained than her other children.

It’s in his stance, the calculating green of his eyes.

As they walk into the room, shown to them by Scott, Grian goes to follow Ren back to their floor when he sees Xisuma pause before entering.

He dials a number on his phone and simply says, “we have the Captain. It’s time for the Warden to make an appearance.”

Grian swallows, keeps his head down as his shoulders roll uncomfortably, wings wanting to make an appearance.

He trusts his friend, his boss.

He does.

But there’s something about that wording that has his hackles rising. He wants to ask, wants to push but Xisuma is his close friend. He trusts him.

However as Grian looks at the man before him, he doesn’t see his friend, he sees a stranger.

So carefully, quietly, he pulls out his phone, walks into a storage closet, locks the door behind him and dials Morningstar’s number.

Chapter End Notes

They’re being separated....

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

We're back! And I'm here to cause problems on purpose!

TW// major character death implied, gore, body horror, amputation, violence, blood, suicidal intention mention, weaponry, severe injury, kidnapping, illegal procedures, swearing

... I'm sorry :)

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George wakes, held down by cuffs on his wrists and ankles to an operating table, and for the first time in years, the acrid taste of fear fills his mouth.

He blinks his eyes open, trying to calm his racing heart as he looks around. He appears to be in a medical wing, one that reminds him of the Room he grew up in.

Thinking back, he remembers leaving Dream, dropping his ring off, taking the shot when staring at Billiam.

He's yet to be wiped but he was captured.

The door opens and he meets the red eyes of the girl. She seems familiar, too, but he can't quite place her face.

"George," she greets in their mother tongue. "Sorry about all of this. We're currently having some technical difficulties."

"Ah," he replies, hoping to stall. "Of what kind?"

She smiles, like she knows exactly what he's doing but still says, "the old facility may have lost the chair but we're not in Russia, are we?"

George nods, keeping his face blank. They're in Belarus, so he's in the original Red Room. "How's Billiam?"

"Healing."

George never misses. He knows he hit the chest area - he was a little too preoccupied to aim for the forehead - but that should've been a killing blow.

“Don’t worry,” she says as the silence stretches. “You’ll meet him soon once you’ve been remade.”

Remade. The chair then. He refuses to shiver at the mention of it.

“Who’s stealing my seat?” He asks and she laughs, the sound like a death knell.

“Someone won’t free one of the Assets,” she says. “Either he breaks or dies. We’ll soon find out which.”

Toast or Corpse, then. George guesses Corpse.

“Anyway,” she says, leaning closer, freezing cold finger brushing up his arm. “I would let you meet the one orchestrating this and start the process now but I think you’re more useful in other areas. Do you remember Sky?”

George does swallow at that. “The first Huntsman Spider.”

“Good,” she congratulates. “He was like you: his powers weren’t anything that dangerous. Especially when compared with the others that could move mountains with their fingertips if they wished. But Sky was so determined and smart.”

“It drove him crazy,” George says because while he doesn’t think he’s ever met the man, he does know he died a long time ago.

“He did have to be put down, yes.” She fits him with an intense, red stare. “But he was so skilled. They had another name for him before he died. Do you know what it was?”

George looks at her and whispers, “Winter Soldier.”

She grins, nods. “Madame B at the time, the instructor for the Widows, suggested icing him between missions to keep him calm. Such a shame how he went out, especially with the ever growing issue of S.H.I.E.L.D. Schlatt is dealing with.”

“Project Insight,” George says for her. “You’re planning on weaponising them.”

She laughs again. “They’re already weaponised. We just need to fix some minor issues before Schlatt puts them in the air. Now this,” she grins, cold finger brushing over the pulse on his neck, “this is where you come in.”

All George can think about is Dream. Dream, who is in D.C.. Dream, who will be dealing with Schlatt and Project Insight. Dream, who will be there if Schlatt gets those Helicarriers up in the air.

The lights flicker and the girl snaps her head up, frowning before a bright smile slips onto her face.

“I’m Hannah,” she says. “Your seat is free and soon, you’ll be our perfect Asset.”

“You knew,” Quackity breathes, curled on a couch in the Syndicate’s base, eyes bloodshot and fuming.

Tommy looks back, cowed slightly. “I couldn’t have stopped him.”

“Yes, you fucking could’ve,” Quackity snaps. “He would- you could-“

“Quackity,” Tommy interrupts. “I’m not Sapnap’s keeper and even if I were to handcuff him to a radiator and watch over him: he would’ve found a way out. You have to trust he knows what he’s doing.”

“He left,” Quackity breathes as Niki walks in, holding a cup of tea. She offers it to Quackity and then sits next to Tommy, watching him carefully.

“I killed Sally,” Niki says, bluntly. “Tommy and I and the rest of the agents have ledgers, dripping red with the blood we have spilt. You don’t seem surprised by that so Sapnap has told you what it was like.”

Quackity nods, shortly. Niki’s lips twitch.

“You know what he’s told you, however, you have no idea what it was actually like. You got to hear about it. We had to live it.”

“And?”

“He knows how to survive in those situations. You don’t. And right now, neither does Karl. But if Sapnap goes, he can help or at least minimise the situation. You, on the other hand, could make it worse.”

They both twitch as Wilbur leans against the doorframe, clearly listening.

Quackity doesn’t seem to notice. He spits, “what’s that supposed to mean?”

“You’re snarky and sarcastic and you try to win every conversation you’re in,” she continues. “That, in the Room, is disobedience. That could get you killed.”

“Karl may be softer than you but he’s less likely to snap back,” Tommy adds. “He’s more likely to survive if he just does what they say.”

Wilbur doesn’t look at Niki when he says, “Tommy, being quiet? In what fucking universe?”

“I’m loud and fucking obnoxious because none of you are going to beat me if I am,” Tommy replies with an eye-roll, ignoring Quackity and Wilbur’s flinch. “In the Room, being compliant will save your life.”

Niki doesn’t mention the fact Wilbur has yet to acknowledge her. Tommy knows this has been going on since they found out about Niki and Sally.

Quackity sniffs, opens his mouth when a phone ringing cuts him off.

They all turn to Wilbur as he grabs the phone from his back pocket, accepting it with a frown. “Yes?”

Tommy tilts his head, trying to hear what’s happening but the voice is too quiet. Still, there is no mistaking the way Wilbur tenses, though.

“What?” He hisses, eyes darting to Tommy’s. “I’ll handle it. Thank you.”

He ends the call and Tommy is standing, panicked by the confusion and flickers of fear in Wilbur’s eyes. “What? What’s happening?”

“The Warden is coming.”

With that, Wilbur spins on his heel and starts shouting for Phil and Techno.

Within twenty minutes, the Syndicate’s Base is chaos. People are packing up and burning things. Computer hard drives are being destroyed while rooms are being shut down and sealed.

Tommy stands outside, watching people get in their cars and leave. He doesn’t know what’s truly happening, even as Fundy shows up, eyes wide at the chaotic scene before him.

“The Warden?” He asks Tommy and he shrugs.

“I don’t know what’s happening,” he says, honestly. “Everyone’s leaving.”

“It’s protocol if the base is compromised,” Fundy says, running a hand through his ginger hair. “Evacuate and pretend that you’ve not been working for a couple of Villains this whole time.”

Tommy hums, rocking back and forth on his heels as he watches the people leave. He wonders if Anchor is okay, and asks.

“They’ll release him to the ocean,” Fundy says, “but he’s fed through a mechanism so he’ll only go if it stops feeding him.”

“Oh,” Tommy breathes. At least Anchor will be alright.

Niki appears with Quackity, and Tommy can see the Widow flickering in her gaze. Only then does he realise he’s very still, the Huntsman lurking in the corners of his mind.

Ranboo and Tubbo follow Wilbur out, both looking relatively calm even as Tubbo’s wings flutter with unease and Ranboo continues to fiddle with his mask. Wilbur still doesn’t look at Niki.

“Funds, I wouldn’t head to Las Nevadas considering it’s technically a shady business.”

Fundy nods. He also doesn’t acknowledge Niki. “Someone is going to have to contact Punz to get him to-“

Niki and Tommy both tense, heads snapping around to the sound of tyres. Tommy only has a knife in his boot. He never has a gun with him now he's more comfortable in the base.

He is regretting that decision.

Techno and Phil leave the warehouse as the vans hastily park, doors slamming open. Jack and Ponk are hot on their heels.

The Warden stands before them, trident in his hand as six ten-man SWAT teams roll out, guns aimed at Fundy, Niki, Quackity, Jack, Ponk, Tubbo, Ranboo and Tommy.

Someone clearly knows that the other members of their family unit are immortal.

Someone clearly doesn't know about Niki and Tommy being somewhat semi-immortal.

Tommy shifts, tugging Tubbo behind him, and moving so that Ranboo is also blocked. It's a little difficult considering his height but Niki moves instantly, slipping in front of Ranboo, as Jack stands at her side. Quackity and Ponk shift behind him.

Tommy and Niki's hands meet and he squeezes her hand desperately.

They're both professionals but they can't fight an entire group without at least some casualties and neither Ranboo or Tubbo heal like they do. Ponk, Quackity, Jack and Fundy don't either.

Wilbur has shoved Fundy behind him while Phil throws his wings wide, hiding both sons from view. The width of his wings also keeps their little group hidden at the back, with Techno's frame blocking them from the SWAT's hungry gaze.

"What's the meaning of this?" Phil asks, staring past the Warden to where Bad steps out from the van, Skeppy and Ant behind him.

All of their eyes are red. Not the red of Techno's, which is like freshly spilled blood. This red is more maroon, like blood that's been sitting for a while.

The blood of the dead.

"Philza Minecraft," the Warden speaks, voice deeper than Sam's, more formal. "Along with the rest of the Syndicate, you are being detained in Pandora's Vault for your crimes."

They move forward and Tommy watches as a lone figure slips out from the Warden's shadow. He shakes his head at Phil while Niki gasps at the sight of him.

"Spifey," she whispers, under her breath and Tommy knows from the look in her eyes that he's an ex-Huntsman Spider.

"I'm a power dampener," the man says, subdued. "Your abilities won't work."

"Get the back in your vans and leave," Wilbur tries anyway in that honeyed tone but none of them stop. Techno's fist clenches and twists but they don't stop.

“Don’t make this more difficult for yourself, Phil,” Bad breathes but it’s clear they won’t go without a fight.

A team reaches Techno and he darts forward, kicking at the guns in their hands, slamming his fist into their faces. Wilbur and Phil take the same incentive and Tommy twitches, wanting nothing more than to help, but Niki tightens her hold on his hand.

“They don’t know,” she quietly says in Arabic. “Don’t think like a Huntsman, think like a Widow.”

Techno takes seven or eight with him but it doesn’t take long for them to press a gun to his skull. Wilbur also ends up freezing when they grab Fundy. In fact, in that second, the area is silent.

Fundy is shaking as a gun is pressed to his skull and Tommy meets his terrified gaze.

“Fundy is a Hero,” Niki says, loudly to the Warden, drawing attention to herself. “Or have you forgotten that?”

“His father-“ The Warden says but Niki takes a step forward, meets his gaze unflinchingly.

“The sins of the father should not affect the son,” she interrupts. “I doubt the public would like to hear how you arrested a son for his father’s supposed crime.”

Wilbur, for the first time in days, meets Niki’s eyes and shoots her a thankful look to Niki. The Warden calmly regards her before nodding.

“We will release him if you all stop fighting and come peacefully.” He looks at Phil. “You must pay for your crimes.”

The ground beneath Tommy’s feet gives way as he watches the chains slam onto their wrists.

Something violently breaks inside him. His breath catches in his lungs and he struggles to keep upright.

“What crimes?” Phil snaps as a muzzle is clipped over Wilbur’s mouth and Techno is forced into a reinforced straight-jacket. “Get the fuck off of me!”

A trident is placed under Phil’s chin and Tommy can feel his heart shatter.

“We’ve heard about you raising assassin children,” the Warden comments and Phil freezes in place. “Among other things.”

“You will not touch them,” he snarls and the Warden shrugs. Tommy and Niki both still, cold veins turning icy.

“They’re property of the American government until someone claims them.”

Tommy doesn’t blink or twitch or flinch. Niki is much the same. They look to each other in their peripherals. He makes a mental note to head over there as soon as this is done.

No one is taking the children. Not after what they've lived through. They survived the Red Room, they will not be harmed.

The Red Room is never getting their hands on those children again.

Not now they're free.

Quackity is grabbed, along with Jack and it's Tommy's turn to stop Niki from following after him.

"Get the fuck--" Quackity snaps as Jack goes into excessive details about how he wants a lawyer and that he needs to be charged for something before he can be arrested. No one replies to either of them as they're frogmarched into a van.

"You're a Widow," Tommy reminds her in Arabic and she stills.

Tommy can feel the Huntsman nudge at the back of his mind. His emotions are spiralling and he has no anchor to stop them.

Dream is in D.C., George is somewhere in Europe, Sapnap is going to Russia and now his family are being arrested in front of him. Tommy's stable life is crumbling before him, leaving him unsteady and lost.

Without his intent, a low chirp leaves his lips.

Ever since he built his nest and started to fly, he's been picking up some of Phil's bird like qualities.

Phil immediately snaps his head around, clearly seeing the panic on Tommy's face and starts to struggle. More of the SWAT have to grab him as Quackity talks a mile a minute and Jack swears and Techno and Wilbur both struggle.

The Warden doesn't seem to be done though.

He looks straight at Niki and says, "what about Phil's other sons: Ranboo and Tubbo?"

"They're children," she hisses and Tommy lets some of the Huntsman bleed across his features.

Ranboo got out from the Room and Tubbo has never known the horror Tommy has. He will not let them be imprisoned. Not when he doesn't know what it's like in Pandora's Vault apart from the fact the prisoners only leave in body bags.

Phil shouts and struggles but Bad blocks his eye-line as the Warden steps closer. Niki and Tommy mirror him and the odds aren't good, especially without their powers but Tommy isn't letting his friends, his brothers be stolen like the rest of his family.

"They may have been complicit in their crimes," the Warden says and Ponk steps past Niki, up to him.

“Hey, man. I don’t know what your problem is but they’re just-“

Tommy has seen bloodshed.

He’s caused some of it, he knows how to kill and incapacitate. He knows how to be ruthless and merciless. He’s had blood split on his hands so many times, he’s surprised they’re not permanently stained red.

He doesn’t expect the Americans to be the way he was trained.

He doesn’t expect to see the Warden level his trident and swing it down.

He doesn’t expect to see Ponk stumble and collapse as his arm is cut cleanly off.

Blood pours from the open wound as Ponk screams and Niki rips her hand from Tommy’s to drop to his side. No one intervenes. No one says anything.

“We need a doctor!” She hisses, ripping his shirt to tie it over the wound and Tommy sees Tubbo start to shake, notices the way Ranboo has stilled.

Tommy cannot protect them from this.

Fundy is released as the the van doors slam shut, Phil and Techno screaming as Tommy watches them disappear from view. Fundy also drops to Ponk’s side while Tommy stands guard in front of Tubbo and Ranboo.

Tommy goes to speak, maybe hiss out a threat, when the Warden suddenly freezes.

“Darren!” A familiar voice calls. “What the hell is happening-?”

Sam trails off, sees Ponk bleeding on the ground, sees Tommy’s wide eyes as he guards his brothers and immediately lunges for the Warden.

“Let me- get off of me!” He yells as SWAT surround him.

“Sam,” the Warden breathes but Sam glares at him.

“I will blow them up. We both know if your power dampener doesn’t affect you, he won’t affect me.”

It’s a low threat, a sizzle to his voice and the Warden nods. The SWAT release Sam and he collapses beside Ponk’s side.

“We need- I need a phone. Someone needs to call-“

“Sam,” Tommy whispers, because he knows Sam and Phil isn’t here and Tommy’s confusion is turning into cold calculation. He widens his eyes more, let’s the tears appear. “He said- he said he was going to arrest Tubbo and Ranboo. Like- like how he took Phil and Wil and Techno.”

He snuffles at the end and Sam snaps his head around to glare at the Warden, smoke billowing from his mask. “You touch them and I’ll burn that Vault to the ground. You know I know how to get in.”

The Warden looks at Sam and sighs. “I’ve informed the medical services,” he says in lieu of an answer. “The ambulance is two minutes away.”

“You’re a monster,” Sam breathes, as Niki keeps talking to Ponk to keep him awake while Fundy sits there beside him, looking like he’s in a daze. “You know that right? Ponk told me to call you, to try and mend that bridge between us. After this? It’s burnt to cinders.”

The Warden pauses as the SWAT climb back in their vans. He looks to Sam and says, quietly, “one day, you will understand that I’m doing the right thing. They are Villains-“

“They’re children!” Sam snaps and the Warden rolls his eyes.

“Punishment comes for us all,” he says and then walks to his van, jumping in.

Tommy watches them drive away, watches as an ambulance takes their place.

He is frozen in place as Ponk is taken, along with Sam. He cannot feel his fingers, can barely breathe as his chest rises and fails unsteadily.

He knows Tubbo is shaking behind him, knows that the Huntsman part of Ranboo must be flickering at the edges seeing how still and silent he is.

Niki is much the same, Widow flickering across her features as she stares at the blood on her hands, on the ground in a neat puddle. Fundy stands but doesn’t speak. He, too, is looking at the blood on his hands.

Tommy swallows and allows the Huntsman to slip over him, protecting him from the swirling emotions.

“You’ll sleep at mine,” he says, turning to look at Tubbo and Ranboo. “I don’t trust the Warden not to come looking and with Sam at the hospital, he might pop up at your house. So no phones.”

He holds his hands out and Tubbo easily hands his over as he shakes. Tommy shifts to face Ranboo and the boy drops his phone in Tommy’s hand. Tommy nods, walks over the edge of a container and shoves the phones under there, in the gravel.

Then he looks to Fundy and Niki. “You can’t go to the bakery or the Tower.”

“Your plan is to run and hide?” Fundy snaps but Tommy doesn’t rise to it.

Not with the Huntsman in control. “My plan is to keep you alive.” He pauses and adds, because he is still Tommy, “dickhead.”

Fundy looks at him. “Then what? We hide in your apartment and then what the fuck are we supposed to do?”

“You want to take on the Warden and Pandora’s Vault alone?” Tommy asks, head tilting. “Fundy, they nearly shot you in the head for just being here. If you go anywhere near there, he will use you against Wilbur.”

“Wilbur is in handcuffs,” Fundy snarls. “They had him in a fucking muzzle.”

Tommy steps up, the Huntsman already spotting weaknesses to exploit in this fight. “And they will kill you if it means making Wilbur comply.”

Fundy steels himself and Tommy knows, just knows, that this won’t end well.

Part of Tommy wants to fight for Fundy. He does.

But his priority is the swaying of Ranboo as dissociation tries to take him, his priority is the panicked beats of Tubbo’s wings. Fundy is older than they are and Tommy cannot protect everyone.

“Fundy,” he says, some of his Russian accent bleeding through. “I will get them out. Give me a week or two-“

“That’s not good enough!” Fundy snaps and it’s more sadness and fear than anger but Tommy nods anyway.

He steps back, reaches a hand for Tubbo. The boy collapses against his back and Tommy simply stares at Fundy.

“He will kill you,” he breathes and Fundy shakes his head, eyes burning with unshed tears.

“I don’t care.”

“Wilbur will be devastated.”

Fundy looks at him and sneers. “Don’t act like you know him when all of this - all of it! - has happened because of you!”

Tommy doesn’t flinch. He knows Fundy is hurting. He knows this is the only way he can express himself.

Tommy can’t stop him as he walks away.

“Fundy,” Niki speaks for Tommy. “The Warden will not hesitate. Let us take care of it.”

“Like how you took care of my mum?” He says and Niki does flinch at that, eyes wide. Fundy winces himself, runs a hand across his face. “I’m sorry. Really. I just- he’s my dad.”

“I know,” she says. “But you will die.”

Fundy shrugs and between blinks, his skin is replaced by fur as he drops to all fours. The fox looks at them and then runs off.

Tommy thinks this is where it starts.

This is moment that defines the rest.

This is the first domino falling.

He looks to the blood puddle and then up at Niki.

This is the start but Tommy doesn't care.

Because his family is gone. The family that was keeping him human.

Without them, he is but a spider watching its web be cut.

The Room always said, to have a place in the world, he must have no place.

So for now, he leads Tubbo and Ranboo away from the puddle of blood and the tyre-marks left by the vans, Niki following close behind in the way they would work if this was a body-guarding mission. For now, he tries to keep his remaining family functioning, breathing.

Tomorrow, he will plan.

Tomorrow, he will fully drop his human face.

Tomorrow, he will be Huntsman Spider.

Karl remembers the car drive. He remembers laughing with Chris as they listened to the radio, screaming their hearts out to the lyrics.

He remembers getting further and further away until Chris had quietened, explaining how Chandler and Jimmy wanted to meet him, too.

Karl wants to meet them both as well.

So maybe he sits there longer than he should, not willing to push.

Quackity always said it was a surprise he got to adulthood considering he would enter a white van with the promise of a puppy waiting for him.

Karl didn't push until they got to countryside. He pulled out his phone and Chris snatched it from his hands.

"Sorry." He had said, pulling over. "But this is easier if you relax."

Seconds later, Karl was unconscious.

That's all he remembers.

Which is why walking up on a soft couch, a thick blanket thrown over him, staring at falling snow outside of the window confuses him.

“Don’t panic,” a familiar voice says.

He looks away from the window of white and to Jimmy smiling a warm smile at him. He hasn’t shaved since the last time they video called.

“Where am I?” Karl asks, slurring his words.

“Russia,” Jimmy says, sitting opposite him. Blinking the haze from his eyes, Karl swallows, staring at the plush velvet chairs, wooden flooring and walls. “Outside Moscow, specifically.”

“Why?” Karl groans, wishing he had Sappnap’s warmth as the cold nips at his cheeks.

He’s in Moscow, which means Chris drugged him enough to somehow travel with him to a different continent.

“Have you ever wondered why you and your fiancé were targeted?” Jimmy says and Karl’s brain lags behind.

“What?” He breathes, blinking at Jimmy with confusion. He’s not scared, not yet. Just unsure.

“A Huntsman Spider infiltrated Las Nevadas before the old Red Room was destroyed,” Jimmy says. “I’m surprised he left you alive considering their track record - those Spiders can be so vicious - and then months later, you’re seen interacting with the Angel. The same Villain who currently has all of the agents at his disposal.”

Karl continues to blink at him. Everything aches and he wants to sleep but a slow form of panic has started to set in. He should run, he thinks. As soon as he can move, he’ll run.

“You know what I’m talking about, Karl,” Jimmy continues when Karl doesn’t answer. “You’re naive but not stupid.”

“If you’re going to kill me, get it over with.” He replies, quietly, clenching the soft blanket in his fists.

Jimmy smiles, straight, white teeth, at him. “No! We never wanted you dead-“ Karl doesn’t like the way he stresses the ‘you’, “-your fiancé is rather annoying but you? You have so much power and you don’t even realise it. That Huntsman may have been sent to collect information about Las Nevadas but he was also sent to bring you to me.”

Karl has the sudden urge to vomit.

He knows Sappnap now, knows he would never do such a thing. But he’s heard of what it was like, he knows Sappnap didn’t have a choice.

“Why you?” He asks, finally, when he can speak without wanting to gag. “I thought you were a bookie.”

“Oh? I am.” Jimmy says, grin widening. “But there’s a reason I’m called Mr Beast. Let’s just say the bets I manage are part of a... lucrative business.”

Karl is too confused to understand. “What?”

“Don’t worry about it,” Jimmy says, standing. “Sleep. Chandler is currently having fun with... an investment of his. Last time they met, it didn’t end well and Chandler’s enjoying the reunion.”

Karl wants to protest, to argue but Jimmy smiles at him once again. Jimmy tilts his head and Karl sees a needle and then everything goes dark.

The last thing he hears is, “either you bet or you become the bet. Choose wisely, Karl.”

The day breaks after Niki and Tommy spend the night sleeping in shifts after Tubbo cried himself to sleep and Ranboo kept waking up with wide, terrified eyes.

Niki cooks - he’s never more thankful that Sapnap stocked his fridge and cupboards - and Tommy waits until Tubbo has gone back to trying to sleep and Ranboo is in the shower for his moment to strike.

Niki, of course, is expecting it. “How long?” She asks, sipping tea from a chipped mug. Tommy doesn’t remember how it was chipped and the thought should scare him because it means he’s slipping.

As a Huntsman, all he needs to know is the mission.

Everything else is irrelevant.

“I’m aiming for a week,” he replies. “It might be two depending on how helpful Sam is.”

She nods, eyes dark. “Will you hurt him?”

“Depends,” Tommy says.

She studies him for a long second and nods at what she sees. “I doubt you will. He wouldn’t hurt a kid and he’s already suffering with Ponk’s situation.”

“That’s why I’m choosing now to go.”

It’s always easier to break someone down when they’re already emotionally compromised.

“I’m on Tubbo and Ranboo watch?”

Tommy snorts. “Yes. I’ll be back to sleep and eat but other than that-“

“Don’t panic if I don’t see you,” she replies. “I know. And if they ask?”

“Tell them the truth,” he says and then pauses. “No. Tell them I’m a working on getting them out but none of the details. I don’t want to fucking incriminate them.”

Niki smiles at him, reaches across to pat his hand. “I’ll look after them.”

“I would ask if I’m doing the right thing,” he says, tangling his fingers with hers. “But I don’t care. I just want them back.”

She squeezes his hand. “You’re going to the orphanage?”

Tommy nods. “The minute they’re out of the country, I’ll go to the hospital.”

Niki looks at him and he looks back. His priority is the children, then it’s his family. She squeezes his hand again and Tommy only pulls away when he hears the shower turn off.

Ranboo appears, towelling off his hair as he complains about the terrible water pressure and Tommy frowns as Tubbo rises, walks into the bathroom and shuts the door. His antennae are pressed tight to his skull and his wings don’t flutter.

In his absence, Tommy walks towards his bed, his nest.

Techno’s pink hoodie and Wilbur’s yellow sweater and Phil’s fluffy jacket. All stacked near Ranboo’s beanie and Tubbo’s shirt. Only then, as he studies his nest does he spot the ring on his beside table.

His fingers shake as he grabs it, stomach dropping. It’s George’s, he can tell because Dream had his when he left and Sapnap dropped his off at Quackity’s.

Tommy stares at it and knows George is back with the Room.

After all, if someone can take the Room down quickly and efficiently, it’s George.

But there’s been no contact and Tommy can’t bring himself to be optimistic when he knows how this goes, how this will end.

He places the ring back on his table, picks up Henry and looks into those black, button eyes. Henry stares back and Tommy swallows.

His nest, his apartment: this is supposed to be a home. He’s supposed to be safe here, with his family’s clothes, with Henry.

But they were stolen from him and now no where is safe.

Tommy became human here, surrounded by his friends and family. He learnt to feel and to heal.

Look how that’s helped him.

Just like the Room said, just like their many lessons: being soft, being vulnerable is dangerous. If he had looked further into Sam’s brother, if they kept looking over their

shoulder for the Department instead of hiding under plausible deniability, none of this would've happened.

Tommy is human.

He's starting to think that's a bad thing.

The door to the bathroom opens and Tubbo appears at his side. Tommy holds Henry out to Tubbo and waits for the boy to take him.

"What?" Tubbo asks and Tommy debates taking the ring off, like his brothers did but he decides to keep it.

He doesn't intend to lose this fight.

If he goes down, if this is truly the end, he intends to bring the entire Department with him.

"Love is for children," Tommy repeats from the lessons in the chair. "And I don't need childish things."

Tubbo's eyes blink in understanding. "Tommy--"

"Look after him," Tommy breathes, nodding to Henry. "I need to know he'll be okay when I'm gone."

Tears fall from Tubbo's eyes but he nods, holding Henry to his chest, wings halfheartedly fluttering. "I will."

"Good," Tommy says and allows the Huntsman to slip across his features. His back straightens, his eyes lose their warmth.

Until he has his family safe, until this is over, he has no use of his newfound humanity.

He may not be Theseus but he doesn't think he's Tommy either.

He's simply Huntsman Spider.

He will keep his friends safe.

And he will get his family back.

Ethan wheezes as Mark prances around his recording room, wearing a tutu with his hair pulled into two pigtails.

"C'mon, Ethan," Mark grins at him. "The viewers want to see your fantastic dancing skills."

"That's just because no one ever believes that I did ballet!" Ethan replies, flexing his feet and lifting his arms above his head, another tutu around his waist.

For a second, he dodges Mark's attempts at ballet, making sure to keep his movements somewhat basic.

It's not like he can be outed as a recruit for the Red Room but he would rather not explain how he knows ballet. Trying to play off that he took gymnastics as a child was easy enough.

He laughs as Mark tries to find some elegance in his movements. He's quiet good and Ethan can't help but be quietly impressed, even as he giggles and tells him he's terrible.

His past instructor would say that Mark has potential.

He's mid-twirl when he feels it.

Something in his mind snaps.

He stumbles and Mark has already started to laugh at his mistake but Ethan can't hear him. Every sense dims as he focuses on the released pressure from his mind.

As though a thread has been cut.

He shudders as his blood run cools and his vision swims.

"-than? Ethan, talk to me, man," Mark is saying and Ethan registers how close Mark is, how cold the hands on his face are.

"Hm?"

"Ethan?" Mark asks and Ethan can see Dark flickering in the background as Mark's eyes flood to black and then back to his usual brown irises.

"He's dead," Ethan whispers, losing his American accent entirely.

Mark freezes. "What?"

"Hellion," Ethan says and realises he's on his knees, Mark holding him up. The camera is still rolling and part of him is concerned with the fact that this is being broadcasted. The rest of him just feels empty. "Everyone calls him Corpse."

"How do you know?" Mark asks and Ethan looks up at him, wonders if he's going to faint.

He feels like he is. Everything is hazy, like a film is over his eyes.

"I can't feel him anymore."

The connection Corpse sustained with him is gone. He said it was because he wanted to know if Ethan ever died again. Then, he would know for sure.

But how ironic, that it's Ethan's turn to feel that pain.

There is no thread connecting them, no wire tethering him to his friend. It's gone. It's broken. It's shattered.

It's how Corpse would describe it when one of his victims died.

Mark's phone starts to ring and Ethan collapses further when he reaches for it because he knows, god, does he know that is Sykunno or Leslie asking him what's happening.

Sure enough, when Mark answers, Leslie is harshly breathing down the line, asking why she felt the bond between her and Corpse break.

"He's dead," Ethan repeats.

Mark is talking lowly but the words don't reach Ethan's ears. He feels adrift, lost to sea, a planet drifting in space without gravity holding them in place.

"Mark," Ethan says, interrupting whatever Leslie is saying. "I need Dark. I need to go to Russia."

"Ethan," Sykunno hisses over the phone - he must've felt it too - but Ethan doesn't react. He just looks at Mark and watches as the black covers his eyes completely.

A smirk pulls on his lips as his body seems to glitch at the edges. He's hard to look at like this, in the light.

Ethan should feel scared.

He doesn't.

He feels nothing.

"Russia, huh?" Dark asks, voice buffering slightly. "What are you going to do?"

Ethan looks at Dark and let's the Huntsman bleed across his face. "They killed Corpse. So I'm going to kill them."

Dark's smile widens. "Oh. This is going to be fun."

Amy appears a few minutes after her Twitter blows up to find an empty room and the viewers arguing in the live chat. The room is darker than she remembers, the shadows seem to stretch and then glitch back into place.

Reassuringly, she smiles at the camera. "Bye everyone!"

Twitter explodes with theories about a new ARG, asking how they were able to disappear from the camera like that, firing off accusations and insinuations. Amy sits and reads through all of them before picking up a phone.

"Hi," she says, brightly, when the line connects. "I'm just wondering if Grey is there?"

Seconds later, a familiar voice replies, "this is a little early. Our weekly discussions happen--"

“Make sure you have a nightlight on,” she interrupts and Grey falls silent, clearly digesting her code words before sighing.

They had multiple when they worked together. A night light refers to Dark’s abilities. She’s waiting to hear-

“Don’t worry about me,” xe says. “I’m winning a lot of money on my dead pool.”

Amy nods. So Sean is there then. “I’m guessing it’s safer for me here.”

Grey laughs. “By the sounds of it? It’s about to get crowded.”

“Keep me updated.”

“Of course,” xe murmurs. “Take care of yourself.”

“You, too.”

Amy ends the calls and leans back into the couch cushions. She never worked with Sean when he was at the facility, he was too much of a risk and Dark had picked her.

He was never violent to her, never aggressive.

Much like how Sean reacted around Grey.

She runs a hand through her hair and simply hopes they return home safely.

She knows, realistically, she doesn’t need to worry that much. Sean can’t die and Dark is extremely powerful when he wants to be.

Amy picks up her phone and starts to plan damage control for the video.

Tommy is half-way to the orphanage when he feels something in the back of his mind snap.

He pauses, ducks into an alleyway and leans heavily against the brick wall of a building.

Corpse.

Corpse’s connection he could never access unless Tommy was unconscious or actively allowing him in. That thread tying them together since Corpse touched him.

It’s been cut.

Grief burns in his veins and Tommy shudders under it.

Corpse is-

The grief bleeds into anger.

Corpse is dead.

He swallows, allows the Huntsman to take full control. He straightens and tugs at the hood over his head.

Tommy was going to go easy on Sam when he was finished with shifting the children away from trouble, away from the prying eyes of the Warden. After all, Sam's boyfriend is currently in hospital, one less limb than before.

But by dealing with getting his family out of prison, Tommy hasn't had time to track down the missing agents.

And now Corpse is dead.

A day ago, Tommy would say he's more human than ever.

Now?

Now, Tommy is gone.

All that remains is the Huntsman Spider.

Chapter End Notes

Guess who's taking a week break?

JK... unless?

Seriously, I'm very sorry <3

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

And we're back!

These chapters are longer and so it does take me longer to write them ;)

TW// major character death, amputation, body horror, scarring, blood, graphic depictions of violence, weaponry, threatening behaviour, mention of past child abuse, mention of brainwashing, mention of suicidal intention, lots of mentions of death, non-consensual drugging, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Fundy doesn't get far.

Once, when he was bored and overheard Sam complaining about his brother, Fundy left the Heroes Tower to investigate.

He's curious, like his father, and smart like him, too. So when posed with a prison that's inescapable, Fundy had to check it out.

It's how he found out about the watchtower and landing pad for takeoff, on the coast, near the Port of the Badlands. From there, he planned to hitchhike on a helicopter but his plans were cut-short when the Warden had appeared, shoving his trident against Fundy's throat.

"You're a Hero," the Warden had said and sighed, releasing Fundy. "Next time, I will kill you."

So maybe Fundy knows what he's about to do is stupid and reckless and borderline suicidal.

He does it anyway.

Sally is gone. She's been dead longer than he knew her and with Wilbur out of the picture, Fundy is tired.

He just wants one last look at his father.

He knows he can't fight the Warden but if anything happens to him, as a Hero, others will start asking questions. Fundy may not be as smart as Wilbur but he's not stupid.

Before he approaches, he loses his fox-fur and stands to his full height. Rifling through his pockets, he grabs his phone and dials a familiar number.

“Hello?” Solidarity answers and Fundy rattles off his location.

“The Warden of Pandora’s Vault has arrested my family without a warrant and without a trial,” he says, calmly, ignoring the way his voice shakes. “I’m sure you’d love this scoop.”

“Don’t do anything stupid.” Is the first thing that crackles across the line and Fundy snorts. “Seriously. We’ve all heard the stories-“

“And every story needs a martyr,” Fundy replies. He presses the FaceTime button, watches as blond hair and blue eyes fill the screen. Fundy shifts his phone up until he can see the vans pulling up in the camera. “Start recording. You’re about to be famous.”

Fundy mutes him, ignoring the sounds of his shouts. Solidarity’s newspaper will reach thousands and Fundy knows, even with the Villains getting arrested, people will demand a trial.

Fundy walks forward as they’re being removed from the vans. His eyes catch Wilbur’s as they widen, panic burning in those brown depths.

Phil is the second one to see him and he snaps, “Fundy, don’t.”

Fundy rolls his eyes, smiles, says loudly, “you know this is illegal.”

The Warden looks back, calmly. “And I said if you came back, I would kill you.”

“You’re the Warden,” Fundy reminds him. “Your little brother is a Hero, is my friend. You’re not going to kill me. Not when it’s wrong.”

“Fundy, go,” Techno hisses at him but Fundy keeps his gaze locked with Wilbur’s.

The Warden tilts his head and sighs. “Recording this won’t help you, Vulpes.”

Fundy shrugs. “It was worth a try.”

“Fundy, please, go,” Phil says as Jack and Quackity stare at him with wide-eyes.

Fundy takes a deep breath - plan A has failed - and remembers what Wilbur taught him.

The daggers slide from his sleeves into his palms.

Within a blink, both embed in two different SWAT member’s necks and Phil and Jack move instantly.

The Warden lunges for Fundy as Phil slices at Techno’s straight jacket and Jack hands the knife to Wilbur while he grabs the gun from one of the dead SWAT.

In seconds, the fearful air becomes charged.

The Warden is quick but Fundy is quicker. He's a fox, after all, and he has his father's cunning. He's not strong like Techno, or trained like Tommy, but he's nimble and with each dodge, his smirk widens.

Behind him, the SWAT teams scramble to fight back against the others as they have to use bloody means instead of their usual tricks. Especially as the power dampener stands silently in the corner, not getting involved, simply watching.

He only speaks when Wilbur gets close. "I wouldn't," he mutters and something about the brief darkness to his eyes, the way his spine straightens and all intrigue leaves his eyes, replaced by cool calculation has Wilbur stepping away.

It's only when Bad and the Warden swap that things start to go wrong.

The Warden focuses more on Phil as Bad steps up to Fundy. His eyes are burning red and his smile isn't friendly at all.

"Hi, Bad," Fundy says, panting slightly. "We're still friends, right?"

He's expecting Bad to laugh it off, to help. He worked under Phil before he joined the Heroes, he was there when Fundy was growing up without a mother.

But Bad simply tilts his head and replies, "you're interrupting important business, Fundy. I have to visit Las Nevadas and I can't leave them waiting, can I?"

He steps closer and only then does Fundy realise his mistake.

Antfrost grabs him, flipping him so that's he's on his back, Ant's knee digging into his chest, holding him in place, sharp claws held over his throat. His eyes are burning red, too.

That's when he hears the yell.

Phil flinches back and Fundy snaps his head around at the sound of his shout. Everything seems to slow as the Warden slams his shoulder into Techno before he can reach Phil. As Techno stumbles, the Warden brings his trident down again and Fundy can barely see anything but the blood on the ground.

In seconds, Phil is on his knees, cuffed hands holding his face while Techno is tackled to the ground. Jack, Quackity and Wilbur are herded back - the gun quickly removed from Jack's hands, the knife taken from Wilbur's - and Fundy can finally spot what's wrong.

Techno's hand is bleeding and as Phil is pulled up, the side of his face is bloody.

The Warden sighs as he approaches Fundy. "This is the problem with Villains: they think they're so much better than the rest of us. So arrogant, misguided."

Bad steps back as does Ant, removing his knee from Fundy's chest, and Fundy lifts his own clawed hand and strikes, across the chink in the Warden's armour. He stumbles slightly as blood falls from the open slash across his ribs onto Fundy and he grins at the sight of it.

He continues to grin even as the trident is pressed to his throat, replacing Ant's claws.

"You have this handled?" Skeppy asks, in an almost bored tone. "We have to head over to Las Nevadas."

The Warden shakes his head, pressing his spare hand to his side. "I need you to help me get them in their cells, what with them being so aggressive. Go in the morning. Hit them before they realise."

Skeppy and Ant both look to Bad and he nods. "So long as we get Las Nevadas."

"What the fuck do you mean?" Quackity shouts from the side of the van. "You can't just- that's my fucking-"

"Language," Bad says, red eyes snapping over to look at Quackity, who flinches back. "You won't need it anymore, will you?"

Quackity snarls wordlessly and the Warden sighs again. "Get them over to the jet," he commands and then looks to Fundy. "I warned you."

"Sam was planning to visit," Fundy says because if anything, he has the poisoned words of his father, the ability to store blackmail material and exploit it. He meets those yellow eyes and bares his sharp teeth. "He was going to bring Foolish and Ponk, have a coffee meeting of sorts because they hated seeing him all- well, upset, over you. You've really fucked up this time."

He almost wants to mention the look Tommy had, the one that promised death.

But he doesn't.

Because Phil is panicking and he knows that desperate look in his non-injured eye. He knows what happens now and that means he's lost.

But Tommy hasn't.

Tommy has the advantage here and Fundy sure as hell isn't going to take that from him.

The Warden looks at him and then up at Wilbur. "I do apologise about this," he says, calmly. "But my promises aren't to be taken lightly."

Fundy also turns his head, meets Wilbur's dark gaze. The muzzle is still over his jaw and mouth and Fundy doesn't know whether to be happy or sad about not hearing his dad say his name for the last time.

Is this what Sally felt when she died? Did she feel at peace or was she struggling under the weight of her life, of the heart pounding in her chest?

She had a husband and young son to return to.

Fundy looks in his father's teary eyes and can almost imagine his mother's hands, petting his hair.

He doesn't look away as the Warden brings the trident down.

There's a sharp pain. His heart pounds in panic as blood rushes from his body. He inhales shakily, chokes on his own blood, lips stained red.

He exhales for the last time as his family scream and Wilbur collapses.

He doesn't close his eyes as the life leaves his body.

Punz doesn't expect to see Tommy as he's doing his rounds.

Las Nevadas is under Charlie's control while Quackity takes some time to deal with the fact he's lost both of his fiancés. Quackity may be on a break but Las Nevadas continues to thrive.

So he's a little confused when he hears through his earpiece that Tommy has been sighted slipping through the back entrance. Punz changes directions, walks the winding corridors of the early morning to see Tommy waiting in Quackity's study.

He looks different, like he did that day in the casino when Minx showed up trying to kill Wilbur.

His back is straight and his eyes are cold. A darkness seems to cling to him, all traces of humanity gone.

"What's up?" Punz asks, casually.

"Quackity has been arrested along with the Syndicate," Tommy says and there's no inflection, no bite. It's so monotone, his Russian accent underlying his words. "Soon they'll be coming here and they will arrest anyone affiliated."

Punz stills before walking over to Quackity's desk, tucking his boot under the bottom of the desk, he lifts the toe of his boot up. Immediately, as the button is pushed, alarms start blearing.

Tommy raises his eyebrows - a flicker of surprise, of approval - and then it's gone.

He turns to leave but Punz calls out his name, stopping him in his tracks. "Are you okay?" He asks, because he may not be Tommy's brother but he is a big brother.

And without Wilbur or Techno around, someone needs to make sure the boy is okay.

Tommy doesn't even roll his eyes or laugh him off. He just nods, short and quick. "I'm fine."

"Tommy-"

Something makes Tommy freeze, head snapping away from Punz to look out of the door. Between blinks, there's a gun in his hand and a calculating, cold look to his eyes.

He steps out and says, "they're here."

Only for Purpled to round the corner at the opposite end of the corridor. Punz meets his confused eyes, turns to Tommy and says, "protect my little brother."

Tommy spares him a brief look - it's oddly desperate, like he's panicking, like he knows what Punz is about to do and hates that he has to let him do it - before turning and grabbing Purpled.

His brother puts up a halfhearted fight until Tommy leans down and throws Purpled over his shoulder. Punz smiles at the shocked and betrayed look filling Purpled's face and then turns to where he hears the approaching footsteps.

He leans against the wall as they approach, anger rising in his throat at the sight of Charlie held in Ant's grip.

"Punz," Bad greets but Punz doesn't look at him.

He looks at Charlie and suddenly shouts, "boo!"

Charlie immediately flinches, phasing through the arms and through the floor. Punz smiles and finally looks at them.

Skeppy's lips twitch. Punz counts it as a win.

"So," he says, tilting his head. "What can I do for you?"

"The Warden wants you," Bad says, in an almost placating tone. "Along with the rest of the staff here in Las Nevadas."

"No can do, Bad," Punz replies. "Las Nevadas has been empty since Quackity left."

Bad hums. "Really? Have you spoken to Frank recently?"

Punz refuses to freeze at that name. "Frank? I don't remember any one called that working here--"

"I'm talking about your father, silly!" Bad says with a laugh. "Any phone calls? Any meetings?"

"He's in prison," Punz says, harshly. "No, I don't speak or see him."

"Interesting," Bad says, looks to Ant. "Why do you think that is?"

"He's a--" Punz starts, straightening but Ant beats him to it.

"He's in cell one-six-three." Ant blinks red eyes at him. "In Pandora's Vault."

Punz stills, swallows. “He’s in Pittsburg.”

“No, you muffin,” Bad says with a laugh. “Quackity told you he was in Pittsburg but he’s not. He’s been paying a lot of money to keep your father in Pandora’s Vault.”

“The Warden tries to keep families together,” Skeppy adds, red shine to his skin. “So if we arrest you, I’m pretty sure your cells will be next to each other.”

Punz remembers his seventh birthday, remembers seeing his dad smile for the first time as they ate cake and Purpled, with his little toddler fingers, kept laughing at the fireworks their mother released into the dark sky.

It’s the only good memory he has of them as a family.

His dad taught him to shoot a gun. His dad also taught him that his skin being bruised was better than Purpled’s.

His mom taught him to count cards. His mom also taught him that saying the word love doesn’t always mean that person cares.

“Or,” Bad says, smiling at him. “Or, you can join us. I’m sure it will love a mercenary on its side.”

“Who’s it?” Punz says, hating the way his voice has shrunk.

At least Purpled is safe with Tommy.

Tommy won’t let anyone, not even their horrid father, hurt Purpled. Even before he knew that Tommy was an assassin, the boy always had a menacing aura about him when he wanted.

He was loud and aggressive but he could be so cold and fierce. He’s loyal and Purpled is in good, capable hands.

“You’ll see if you join us,” Ant says.

“It gives you everything you want,” Skeppy adds. “And you’ll never have to see Frank again.”

Punz thinks of Purpled as he steps up and takes Bad’s hand.

He’s been beaten black and blue for his brother. He’s bled for his brother. He would die for him if he had to.

So he lets himself walk into the unknown, all while thinking of Purpled’s smile.

Phil reaches for his son even as the side of his face burns with agony. Wilbur is dazed, shaking.

They manhandle them away from the vans, everyone deathly silent as he grips his son's hands. They're so cold.

"A medical team will be waiting for you when we arrive," the Warden explains, still gripping his side. "As for Vulpes--"

"The Heroes will hold a funeral," Bad says with a smile but Wilbur doesn't even blink even as Techno glares at them.

Phil may not have full access to his abilities but he could feel the way death suddenly wrapped itself around Fundy like a blanket.

He sees the crows as the aircraft lifts into the sky.

He wonders why Kristin isn't here despite his begging. Fundy may not be like them, may not be a reaper - he wanted to wait, wanted to fit into his skin more before he made the choice - but he is-

The breath lodges in Phil's throat.

-was Phil's grandson. Kristin should at least be here to bid him a farewell.

"May he take his place among them in the halls of Valhalla," Phil mutters, the old prayer falling from his lips in a rough translated version. "Where his enemies have been vanquished and where the brave shall live forever. We shall mourn but rejoice for he has died the glorious death."

Phil blinks but one of his eyes won't open. He ignores his thoughts and looks to Wilbur's dazed expression and Techno's hand that one of the SWAT has loosely wrapped.

The ring and pinky finger of his right hand aren't there.

Phil meets his red eyes - the red is warm, unlike the others beside them; their red eyes are wrong, like the blood of a corpse - and they both know he will never hold a sword again.

Phil has lost an eye, Techno has lost his fingers and Wilbur has lost his son.

He prays to Kristin that his boys back home are safe.

Tommy is seriously debating handcuffing Purpled to a radiator. If the boy tries to bite him again, he'll do it. He swears on Kristin, he will do it.

"-let me go! You- you bastard! My brother--"

Tommy rolls his eyes. "Purp," he says, coldly. "Stop fighting or I will knock you out. Have you even been hung upside down by your foot? 'Cause you're about to find out. Shut the fuck up."

Purpled glares at him. "Go and help him."

"No," Tommy replies, thinking over the conversation they overheard. "I'm helping you."

"Tommy--"

"No." Tommy replies and then spins, gun raised at the figure approaching.

Charlie freezes at the sight of him and he carefully lowers his weapon. Purpled looks over Tommy's shoulder.

"Are you okay?" He asks and Charlie shrugs.

"Phased through the floor. Punz scared me," he says with a smile and Tommy knows Punz is minimising collateral damage.

"Do you have a safe house?" Tommy asks because as much as he'd love to offer his apartment, it's already becoming crowded.

Charlie meets Purpled's eyes and nods. "Quackity has a couple of escape plans."

Tommy turns back to Purpled. "Am I going to have to knock you out?"

"They've got Punz," he says and Tommy nods.

"But he's not dead and he's not going to the fucking prison," Tommy says. "Even if he was going to that fucking prison, I'm going there too, once I work out how to get in."

For a second, they stare at one another. Tommy waits him out. Purpled narrows his eyes but finally sighs.

"Let's go, Charlie," Purpled says, walking away and Charlie follows but pauses in front of Tommy.

"Dap me up?" He breathes and Tommy holds out his hand and doesn't flinch when Charlie pulls him into a hug. "Be careful. Stay alive."

"Of course," Tommy replies as Charlie pulls away.

"Tommy," Purpled calls before Tommy can leave.

"Yeah?"

"If they're telling the truth, if my dad is there," he says, eyes burning. "Kill him for me, would you?"

Tommy's lips twitch. "You have my word."

Purpled nods, let's Charlie link their arms before disappearing down the corridor. Tommy makes his way back up to the second floor, pausing to see Punz with red eyes. He makes a mental note of: Frank, cell one-six-three.

He swallows and leaves.

First the orphanage, then the hospital, then the prison.

Karl startles awake, frantically trying to breathe as someone gently grips his shoulders. “Woah!” They say. “Deep breathes!”

Karl just keeps panting before hissing, “someone’s coming here to kill us. He’s laughing and glitching and-“

Karl shudders. There’s a pause and Karl finally opens his eyes to see Chandler frowning at him. There’s blood under his fingernails. Karl draws his eyes away.

“You’re getting stronger,” Chandler comments and then grabs his radio. He presses the button down on the side and speaks, clearly, “it seems Dark is coming home.”

There’s a pause, then a crackle. “Karl?” Jimmy asks and Chandler grins at Karl.

“Yeah. That serum stuff is working.”

Karl blinks. “Serum stuff?”

Chandler rolls his eyes at him. “We’re not just drugging you.”

“Oh,” Karl replies, trying to rid himself of the man glitching at the edges, ripping through armed soldiers like it was easy. He hates the familiarity of Chandler’s tone when he talks so casually about drugging Karl.

He hates the way he still sees them as his friends, even when his brain screams at him to run.

“Where did he see him?” Jimmy’s voice crackles through and Chandler looks at Karl expectantly.

“There were cells behind him,” Karl whispers and Chandler relays the message across.

Another crackle. “I’ll get the holy water,” Chris jokes. “I’m guessing we’re going with plan A for this one?”

“Once we get him in his cell, we’ll be fine.” Jimmy replies. “Chandler-“

“Yeah, yeah. I know.” Chandler puts his radio away and turns to Karl.

He leans over to a cabinet and pulls out another syringe. Karl shakes his head.

“C’mon, man,” he says, holding his hands up. “Please-“

“Sorry,” Chandler says, not sounding apologetic at all. “But we’re making you stronger. You’ll thank us for it later.”

Before Karl can even try and fight, the syringe is sliding into his neck and the darkness consumes him again.

Tommy sneaks into the orphanage, keeping low and holding a silenced gun.

Sykunno notices him the minute his feet hit the top of the stairs. Tommy shakes his head, signs what's happening and Sykunno's normally angelic face darkens.

They split up and Tommy rounds up the children from the upstairs while Sykunno covers the downstairs. They work their way to the middle and Tommy escorts them out of the tunnel Drista built.

Leslie is waiting for them. "Where to?"

"Somewhere safe," he says. "Don't tell me."

Sykunno frowns at him. "You're not coming?"

"I have to get them out of that shithole," he says and then shrugs. "And also hunt down my brothers."

Sykunno and Leslie share a look and Shroud pushes himself to the front, Hive lurking close behind him.

"We could help," he says and Tommy shakes his head.

"They're looking for a reason to arrest you all and then ship us all off to Russia. Don't give them a reason. If I fail, that's on me."

"You won't," Leslie says for him, eyes burning. "If anyone can survive this, it's you."

"You killed the woman," Michael says, big eyes blinking up at him.

"You blew up the Room," Shroud adds.

"And you befriended both the Heroes and Villains of this place," Sykunno says. "Take care of yourself. Don't die."

Tommy snorts. "I'll try my hardest."

He turns away as Leslie opens a portal. He waits until they're all gone, until he's standing alone, before he sets off for the hospital.

Kristin can't feel much from her Egg cage.

Everything is slow, dull. Her body has started to ache. She's not used to feeling so tired. The longer it feeds on her, the weaker she becomes.

She wonders if this is how she'll die.

She doesn't know when she feels it. She doesn't know how.

All she knows is that as she blinks, she can feel her grandson pass through the veil as his life is taken from him, stolen from him.

She lets out a sob. There's no way she can save him, no way she can make his journey easier.

Kristin cries for her dead grandson and prays that she will not have to feel her children, her husband die, too

Tommy's waiting for Sam on the windowsill in the waiting room when he walks in. The man freezes at the sight of him, green eyes flicking between Tommy and the blade he's flipping in his hand.

"I wouldn't try anything," Tommy says, quietly. "I don't know how much control you have over your explosions but Ponk is sleeping off losing his hand in the opposite room and you have a lovely elderly couple below you. Broken hips are annoying, aren't they?"

Sam continues to stare at him.

Tommy stares back, adds, "plus, I don't think I can die, so that would suck for you."

"Why are you here, Tommy?" Sam asks and Tommy catches the handle of the dagger, holding it steady. The tip of the blade digs under his fingernails and he begins to pick at his cuticles.

"Well," he says, calmly, noting the way his accent keeps fluctuating as the Huntsman flickers at the edges of his mind. "After doing some research - you really need to work on hiding who you are by the way, it's all public knowledge - you and the Warden are very close, aren't you? Samuel and Darien. He's the older brother, right?"

Sam is rigid where he stands and Tommy gives him a small smile. He waits him out.

"What do you want to know?" He asks after a few minutes of silence and Tommy goes back to flipping the blade.

"I don't know if you're aware," he says, knowing full well that Sam is very aware, "but currently my family is imprisoned in a place called Pandora's Vault. All I need are floor plans. Maybe an entrance and exit."

"I don't know anything, Tommy," Sam says, carefully and Tommy rolls his eyes.

"Bullshit. I heard you say to the Warden that you knew how to get in. Don't fucking lie to me."

"I don't-"

Tommy is there, knife against Sam's neck, both pausing.

"Now, now," Tommy whispers. "We wouldn't want to wake up Ponk, would we? Or those lovely nurses that'll be checking up on him in ten minutes?"

"Tommy," Sam breathes, almost desperately but Tommy shakes his head.

"Tell me what you know."

"You're not going to kill me, Tommy," Sam replies. "You're not a killer anymore. You don't hurt people."

Tommy laughs, a low, bone-chilling laugh. "Oh, Sam," he says, eyes losing all warmth as the Huntsman takes the reins, allows Tommy to recede back into the safety of his forest. "That was before I watched my family get carted away in chains. That was before I heard the rumours of that place."

He waits, watching Sam's eyes widen in fear. A wolffish grin tugs at Tommy's lips.

To the side of him, on to the coffee table of the waiting room, next to the magazines, Sam's 'Awesome Dad' mug sits. Tommy would find it ironic, would find it funny, considering the position they're in.

But he doesn't.

He doesn't feel anything.

"So," he says, "let's try this again. What do you know about Pandora's Vault, Sam?"

Chapter End Notes

Whoops :)

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Some Hermit lore <3

TW// brief gore, brief mention of past torture/human experimentation, brief mention of human trafficking, graphic depiction of an injury, blood, mention of death, non-consensual drugging, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Solidarity stares as the screen glitches and then falls black. He tries to call back, tries to get any contact with Fundy but the phone doesn't even ring.

He drops his head onto his desk, breathing deeply.

For a few seconds, he's lets the panic build and then fall, like a wave cresting. Once the panic has subsided somewhat, he shoves his emotions aside and grabs his phone, checking the screen recording.

Everything is there up to the Warden mentioning how that recording won't help Fundy, and then blackness.

He stands from his desk, walks past the other journalists and straight into his boss' office. Shubble looks up, blowing her brown fringe from her face, opening her mouth probably to reprimand him but he just holds his phone out for her to take.

"Listen," he says. "Please."

She blinks but takes his phone, plays the video and as the seconds tick by, her frown deepens. By the end, she's staring at the screen, an unreadable look in her brown gaze.

"The Syndicate have been unlawfully arrested and imprisoned. Fundy might be-" She stops herself before she can finish and Solidarity nods.

"Yeah," he replies, quietly. "Can I run the story?"

"Go bigger," she instructs, furious look to her eyes. "Blur their faces - for Fundy- Fundy's sake - and then release the footage to Twitter. Tell the people a story is coming, ready to display Pandora's Vault's crimes."

Solidarity grins. "Yes, boss."

He walks back to his desk, sits down and opens a word document.

He's barely started typing when the phone rings.

Fundy's number.

Before he can even scramble to answer it, a voice starts speaking. Not Fundy's. It sounds like a young girl's.

"Recordings of the prison or of the Warden are prohibited," the girl says and Solidarity blinks at the screen.

"What? Who are you?"

"Pandora." Solidarity pauses at that. As in Pandora of Pandora's Vault? Is this a real girl or is this some strange recording? "I'm currently running a background check and you don't appear to be an active threat."

Solidarity swallows. "Surely that's illegal."

"It's protocol. Also I find it quite funny that you are concerned about the legality of things when you have three traffic violations."

Solidarity pauses, runs a hand through his blond hair. "I didn't know about the third, so thank you? But--"

"Do not make yourself a threat, Jimmy."

With that the line clicks dead and Solidarity reels back at the mention of his real name.

What the hell has Fundy got himself involved in?

Dream is trying not to be paranoid. He is. He's really trying.

Puffy is discussing meeting with Schlatt while Drista and Foolish sit in the corner, throwing a ball back and forth. Dream tries to relax but something is making him focus more on Xisuma, something telling him to keep him away from his siblings.

It's taken five days just to get ahold of Schlatt as no one seemed to know where he lived, his current location, anything related to what he's doing. There is no hotel rooms or apartments in his name and Dream has honestly considered dropping the act of normal son to track him down himself.

Until False had held out a phone and Puffy spoke to her brother for the first time in months.

Even still, Schlatt doesn't want to talk and Dream is becoming increasingly more paranoid with each passing hour.

Something is up between False and Xisuma.

Something is up with a few of the Hermits. They're more withdrawn, more suspicious of him and his family.

Dream doesn't want to assume they're bad people with a nefarious purpose but he's more than a little paranoid about it all.

His suspicions are confirmed on the sixth day - still no contact from Sapnap, George or Tommy, not even a message to check-in - when he's approached by a shifty-looking Grian. He's hiding wings, that much is obvious from the rolling of his shoulders and Dream stores that knowledge away as the man leads him into an empty conference room.

"What's up?" He asks, letting the knife in his sleeve slide down until he can feel the coolness of the blade next to his palm.

"You're friends- I mean, associates of the Syndicate, right?" Grian asks, not meeting his eyes. "In the earlier meeting, when discussing L'Manberg's problems with Villain activity, none of you suggested arresting them."

Dream tilts his head.

Grian is trained. They all are if they're working for S.H.I.E.L.D. but Dream is confident that if it came to a fight, he'd end it quickly. He's not cocky about it, Grian may have a deadly power, but Dream was the official Huntsman Spider.

"If I answer you," he says, slowly, hoping to get more information than he bargained for. "Can you answer one of my questions? Honestly."

Grian pauses and then nods.

"We know the Syndicate and we have no explicit reason to have them arrested." Dream makes sure Grian is looking at him when he asks, "why do you want the Red Room children?"

Grian freezes and Dream keeps his body language open and relaxed, even if he's preparing to chase the man. Grian's eyes are wide, shoulders rolling with anxiety but Dream waits him out.

A question for a question. An answer for an answer.

"How do you-?"

Dream smiles. It's not a friendly smile. "Answer the question."

Grian must see the Huntsman lurking in his eyes because he swallows. "The Angel is trafficking them."

That throws Dream off completely.

“No, he’s not.” He replies, blinking at him. “What? Why would you- no?”

Grian rapidly blinks back, hands coming up to wave around frantically. “That man found dead, splashed across the news, they were the Red Room’s leader? They die and suddenly the Angel is spotted with a hundred kids and Iskall points out the guy that shot him - Baba Yaga, have you heard of him? - is with them?”

Dream refuses to let the colour drain out of his face at George’s title.

He takes a steadying breath and realises the conclusion they’ve drawn. “The Angel hasn’t abducted or hurt those kids,” he says, truth making the words on his tongue heavy. “He isn’t like that, he wouldn’t do it. I swear to you on my mother’s life, the Angel hasn’t harmed or intends to harm, those children. He rescued them, offered them a home.”

He offered them more than a home, Phil offered them a family too and Dream has never been more thankful to see the impact on Tommy. His little brother is acting like the teenager he is without the fear of punishment or death.

Grian continues to blink at him. “Oh,” he breathes and then his eyes widen more.

Dream feels the cold press of the blade to his skin and waits. He knows whatever Grian is about to say is going to be bad.

“So,” Grian says, a little nervously, once again not making eye contact. “You’re friends with the Syndicate? Well-“

“Grian,” Dream interrupts, letting more of the Huntsman bleed into his expression. “What is it?”

“Xisuma and the Warden - the guy that runs Panora’s Vault - have been in contact and I think they’re heading for the Syndicate.” Grian rambles and Dream does tense at that, causing Grian to only speak faster. “So I contacted Morningstar because we know each other - it’s complicated - but he hasn’t got back to me. It’s been five days.”

Dream swallows. He can’t get ahold of anyone, he’s already tried so Grian probably isn’t lying to him.

He has no reason to.

“Fuck,” he hisses, running a hand across his face. He needs to go back to L’Manberg, make sure Tommy isn’t spiralling.

He hopes Sapnap is looking after him in this time but something tells Dream that Tommy is out there, dealing with this the only way he’s been taught: independently.

“Yeah,” Grian replies and then smiles self-deprecatingly. “I don’t know if anyone heard me make the call but I don’t know who to trust and-“

The door opens.

Dream has to fight the instinctive urge to throw the dagger in his palm straight at the person that steps past the threshold.

Mumbo appears, frowning at the two of them. “Oh!” He says, looking between them. “Puffy is looking for you, Dream. Is everything okay?”

Grian has tensed and Dream knows this is someone he doesn’t know he can trust. So he slides the blade back up his sleeve, steps closer and bumps Grian’s shoulder, like how he would do to Tommy if they were on a mission.

It’s a reassuring gesture, one that says he’s with him in this situation.

Grian relaxes, just like how Tommy would.

It makes the smile on Dream’s lips more genuine.

“I got lost,” Dream says, calmly. “Grian was supposed to show me- key word: show-“

“Hey!” Grian says with an eye roll. “It’s not my fault-“

“You’re only making this worse for yourself,” Dream snarks back and looks back to Mumbo. “My mom wants me?”

Mumbo is grinning at them - there is no suspicion in his gaze, no tell that Dream can spot that would suggest Mumbo doesn’t believe their lie - but his face turns serious.

“Schlatt is here,” he says and Dream does freeze at that.

The impossible choice.

Stay with his blood-related family. Ensure their safety and be the son, the brother they need to deal with their newly revived uncle.

Or, go back to L’Manberg and check on his little brother.

“Where are they?” He asks, stepping forward and Mumbo is quick to lead both of them away from the conference room.

Dream doesn’t think too hard about his decision. Tommy has survived worse than a family being taken from him.

After all, Tommy survived him.

Sean doesn’t expect to see Dark when he’s herded back to his cell. He doesn’t expect to hear the familiar shouts and the brief glitches around the walls as Dark tries to escape.

“Hey, buddy,” Sean says, weakly, as his skin heals over his organs. “They got you too, huh?”

There’s a pause and then, “Sean?”

“Yep,” he replies, leaning his head against the wall. “Still fucking alive. How about you? All in one piece I hope?”

“They told me about the trackers,” he snarls, voice distorting and Sean’s brow furrows.

“Uh, what? What fucking trackers?”

There’s another pause. A longer one.

“The one the Beast puts in all of the winners before we’re experimented on in case we run off,” Dark replies. He takes a breath and then hisses, almost sarcastically, “they said all the scientists get them and if I killed anyone, they’d go after Amy. They also grabbed Ethan and put a fucking gun to his head.”

“Ah,” Sean hums. He prods at his bloody stomach and finds that he’s mostly healed. At least he can’t see his organs anymore. “They’re tricky bastards.”

“I’m going to fucking kill them.”

Sean laughs. “Join the fucking line.”

“How’d they get you?”

“Grey isn’t dead.”

“Oh,” Dark replies, voice becoming more and more like Mark’s. “That’s rough.”

“They strapped a bomb to xis chest,” Sean says, slowly, calmly. “So if we get out, the bastards that did that are mine. I’m ripping some hearts out.”

“So long as I get the guy who sold me out,” Dark replies. “I couldn’t see him but they thanked him as they shoved me in here.”

Sean snorts. “Deal. You’ve got to grab Grey though because-“

“I got it,” Mark interrupts, because his voice isn’t distorted. The power dampening of his cell has left Dark receding back into Mark’s mind. “I think we have another ally.”

“Oh yeah?” Sean asks and Mark hums.

“Before they shoved me here, Sapnap was getting hosed down as they wrestled him into a cell.”

Sean blinks. “Sapnap’s here? Fucking hell. I hope he burnt a few.”

Mark laughs. “He was surrounded by a couple of bodies.” He sighs. “Someone’s just got to open these doors and not shoot me.”

“We’ve got time to kill,” Sean replies. “I spy? Odds and evens? Mind chess?”

A longer pause. So long, Sean wonders if Dark’s exhaustion has led to Mark passing out.

And then, “you know Corpse?”

Sean rolls his eyes. Mark may be getting more aquatinted with Corpse because of Ethan but Sean has been close to him for a while now. “Love the guy and his deep voice. Why?”

“He’s-“ Mark mumbles something and then clears his throat. “He’s dead. Ethan felt their connection snap.”

Sean freezes. Every muscle locks and his breathing increases.

“That’s why we came,” Mark says, quietly. “Ethan doesn’t know where they’re at but he guessed-“

“Mr Beast would know,” Sean breathes and pulls his knees to his chest, dropping his head there. “Fuck.”

So the Room is officially killing them off then. The agents are of no use of them.

And if they’re willing to kill someone as useful as Corpse—

Sean swallows, stands up and slams his hand against the door until his fist is bleeding and it swings open to multiple armed guards and a confused-looking Grey.

“Are you-“

“You’re alive,” Sean says and Grey frowns before nodding.

“Yes,” xe says, lifting a hand to xis neck and pressing fingers against xis pulse point. “Still alive.”

Sean sighs and then walks back to his place on the floor. The doors close and Sean slams his head against the wall.

“We’re fucked,” he says and Mark laughs.

“That’s the understatement of the century.” There’s another pause and then, “I spy?”

“Where are you taking them?” Phil asks when he sees Quackity and Jack be removed from the group.

“They don’t have abilities,” the Warden says, watching as their wounds are disinfected and wrapped.

Techno’s hand is covered in white bandages and Phil’s face has been cleaned, a bandage covering his left eye. The medical staff inform him there is a strong possibility he will not see out of it again.

He doesn’t even feel angry.

All of his emotions are focused on Techno's silence and Wilbur's dazed gaze.

So Quackity and Jack are led away, but in opposite directions. A very tall and muscular man, with hooves for feet and bull's horns on his head, takes Quackity.

Phil hears him introduce himself as Beef.

"Let's go," the Warden commands and Phil rises from his sitting position and follows him.

Wilbur is dropped off first. He looks at Phil in panic but there's a gun pressed under Phil's chin the minute he takes a step closer.

Techno is next. He doesn't have the same panic but he looks more than a little angry.

Phil is led deeper into the prison.

"It's like a labyrinth," he mutters.

"Even though Pandora watches over everything all of the time," the Warden says. "Some inmates are a lot more deadly than others. Having staff like Beef, who are trained, and winding, confusing corridors limits any possibility of escape."

"Pandora?" Phil asks, willing to push if he's getting answers.

"Yes?" A voice replies, seemingly from the ceiling and while Phil doesn't flinch, his wings curl tighter around him.

"Pandora, meet the Angel. Phil, this is Pandora. She's my AI, my eyes and ears."

Phil swallows as they enter a large room, almost looking like a lobby. There's a desk in the corner and screens in front of it, showing multiple camera angles. There's a metal door at the other end of the lobby and Phil already hates the black obsidian surrounding him.

"Your abilities means we've taken extra precautions," the Warden informs him. "All standard procedure."

Phil snorts. "Just like getting arrested without a charge, imprisoned without a trial, a lawyer or a phone call? Does standard procedure not include human rights?"

The Warden looks at him. There is something chilling about his eyes.

"You're in Pandora's Vault, Philza," he states. "You no longer have rights."

All of the Hermits are there when Grian, Dream and Mumbo walk into the conference room.

Dream immediately beelines for Puffy and his siblings, all standing - apart from Drista, who's throwing and catching a ball repeatedly, seemingly unbothered - as they look to the man grinning at the head of the table.

His horns curl around his ears, eyes a muddy red. His suit is expensive and pressed and his grin is a deadly one, a smug one.

Grian has never met Schlatt personally.

“Ah, the golden boy has returned home,” Schlatt says, grin widening at the sight of Dream. The man beside him tenses slightly at the look.

Grian no longer wants to meet Schlatt personally.

“Can you give us the room?” Dream says, not replying to Schlatt and instead looking at Xisuma.

He opens his mouth to respond but Schlatt beats him to it. “No, no, no, nephew,” Schlatt says. “I think I should have witnesses to this. I don’t know about you but the last time there were no witnesses, I got shot.”

“In the head,” Dream replies, voice still calm and even. “So how are you alive?”

“Tommy, right?” Schlatt says, head tilting. “That’s the one that shot me.”

Dream’s eyes narrow, ever so slightly. “How did it feel to know that the woman you thought was giving you a job was the one to have you shot?”

“Hey!” Puffy shouts, palm slamming onto the conference table. Both men turn to face her as a couple of the Hermits flinch. “Would you two stop?”

“Puff-Puff-“ Schlatt tries but Puffy holds up her hand.

“Stop. Just- just stop.” She takes a deep breath. “Schlatt, you’re alive. We’re going to talk about that but first, why are you running for President? Why didn’t you come to see us- see me?”

Schlatt raises his eyebrows, red eyes burning. “See you? When you let me die?”

Grian feels like he’s watching a reality TV show.

“You knew that they took my son-“

“And look! He’s back now!” Schlatt points at Dream and Grian is surprised at how relaxed Dream seems to be under this attention. “I tried to help you find him.”

“And you joined the organisation that took him,” Puffy snaps.

Schlatt has the audacity to look somewhat guilty. “Well, I was being fucking controlled by that guy with the burns. Crops, right?”

“Corpse,” Dream says, voice not strained at all. “His name is Corpse.”

“That’s a little creepy,” Gemini mutters and False grins at her.

“Right? Who names a kid Corpse?”

At that, Dream twitches, eyes flashing with something angry, something pained. Foolish sits straighter and Puffy’s glare only grows more intense.

Drista is the one to say, too calmly, “so, Uncle Schlatt. You’re alive. Cool. Whatever. Who revived you?”

Schlatt turns his head to lazily look at her. “Dear niece, you wouldn’t believe me if I told you.”

She catches the ball and stares straight at him. “You’d be surprised. Spill or I start spawning goats. Maybe a few bombs-“

Xisuma and Scar immediately start speaking while Doc and Ren grin at each other. Mumbo smirks over to Grian, who sighs. Cleo just rolls her eyes while Iskall chokes on a laugh.

Yes, Grian definitely preferred not meeting Schlatt personally.

“The woman who died - Chloe? - never mentioned she had a... contact from her past. But that contact saw me and, well, I’m destined for fucking greatness. I’m going to be a fucking god!”

He raves like a madman but Grian finds himself nodding along, drawn to the man. Instead of being confused or worried, he’s calm, intrigued.

It’s only when Dream knocks their shoulders together again does he blink at the sea of swirling emotions in his mind.

Puffy slams her hand onto the table again and Schlatt rolls his eyes.

Immediately, the calmness and intrigue is dissipated. Grian feels like he can breathe again.

“C’mon, Puff-Puff,” he says, standing. “Bring the kids. We can have a proper family reunion where there’s alcohol. Crops left that behind- or maybe I’m just an alcoholic! I have so much to discuss with you.”

Grian watches them leave, Dream lurking at Puffy’s shoulder like he’s her personal body-guard.

“That was interesting,” Ren mutters.

“Did we just watch a family fall apart or recover?” Iskall adds. “I’m leaning towards fall apart.”

Xisuma rolls his eyes. “Enough. We have more pressing matters to deal with such as investigating where the children are.”

Scar nods, turns to him. “I checked the now empty base, Las Nevadas, literally everywhere and no sign of them.”

“They’ve probably hidden them,” Doc says, eyes alight as if this is a calculation he can work out.

“Where though?” Cleo says with a sigh. “I need so much coffee to get through this.”

Grian smiles at her, eager to get some air. No one seems to be watching him suspiciously. No one seems to know that he helped Morningstar.

“I’ll go put a pot on,” he says and wishes this was simpler.

He trusts his friends, his coworkers, his boss. He likes them. His memories are filled with them.

But right now, he feels like something is coming and by the end of it, many of them will be on the opposite side of him.

Grian shakes his head. He’s not deserting the Hermits for Villains, he’s not, he’s not a bad guy-

But-

But Dream said Phil wasn’t a trafficker and Xisuma is acting strange and Grian is thankful his wings aren’t out, for he would be plucking feathers out in stress.

He shakes his head again. Coffee.

Maybe if he focuses on the small things he won’t end up having a breakdown.

Four hundred and fifty six once stood before him.

Now it’s down to two hundred and ten.

As the days go on, Karl becomes more and more withdrawn whenever he wakes. There are dark bruises under his now golden eyes and his skin is paling. Even stranger, his clothes seem to be bleaching white. No matter what he changes into, within the day, it’s white.

His memory is becoming hazy, something that is very useful in this situation. That’s how the Spiders and Widows were broken, that’s how some of Jimmy’s experiments were made complicit.

When he wakes, they tell him over and over and over again that they’re his friends and that he enjoys being here, that he asked to become more powerful. His fracturing mind doesn’t call them out on this. He simply nods, grateful for the information given.

“Karl,” Jimmy breathes, shaking him slightly. The couch has become his makeshift bed as he sleeps off the transformation occurring in his blood. “Red or yellow?”

The man doesn’t even twitch. They’ve yet to fully explain what type of games they run.

“Karl, what’s your bet?” Jimmy presses as the players are told to pick a colour and then are instructed to follow a staff member to opposite sides of the forest.

He’s very thankful for that recruit from the Room that helped to grow the trees.

Jimmy still remembers when Chris tried to climb one of the them and got stuck. He doesn’t think Chandler has laughed as hard.

Karl stirs, only to say, “yellow will win.”

Jimmy hums, letting Karl turn his head back into the pillow and sleep.

He’ll see how accurate Karl’s predictions are (very accurate, if the last couple of times he’s asked have proved anything) before offering the VIPs a way to double their money. Hopefully, Karl will be able to predict who the winner is from their players.

Or maybe Jimmy can make a game just for Karl. The players have to guess his predictions. Or, Karl has to prove his predictions are correct when in the games.

“The players are ready,” the automated voice tells him and Jimmy nods, steps closer to the glass so he can watch. The cameras are positioned for optimum viewing and the VIPs watching all chime in with their approval.

Looking down at the forest, two flags are on opposite sides. One yellow, one red. In the hands of the players, they hold real swords and crossbows.

The team that can capture the other’s flag, wins.

And survives.

Jimmy grins. “Let the Beast Games begin!”

(Twenty minutes later, yellow are victorious. One hundred and five people leave the game. One hundred and five bodies are collected from the grass.)

Sam doesn’t mean to throw the mug into the wall but as he sits on the cold, hospital floor, hearing the soothing beats of Ponk’s heart monitor, he can’t help but cry at the sight of the shattered ceramic.

The Tommy he saw today wasn’t Tommy.

He wasn’t even Theseus, the vigilante he met with the Russian accent and confusion over being trusted and listened to.

Whoever was in front of him was colder, darker.

Sam was more than a little fearful, if he’s being honest.

That look in Tommy's eyes was deadly, calculating, like he was detaching himself from the situation, ready to do everything and anything to get the knowledge he needed.

Not that he needed to do anything.

Sam told him everything he knows about Pandora's Vault. Even if that meant condemning his brother to the boy before him.

Sam looks at a certain shattered piece of mug, displaying the word 'Dad'. His heart breaks. The same boy that gave that to him, has held a knife to his throat.

"Sammy?" Ponk calls, voice hoarse and Sam rises on shaky legs.

"Here," he replies, voice just as ruined. "Do you want me to- to tell Foolish?"

"No," Ponk says, looking so tired. "He'd worry to much and Puffy needs him. Are you okay? You look rough, man."

Sam snorts. It sounds more like a sob. "I think- I think Tommy is going to try and break Phil and them out. I think... I think he's going to kill my- kill Darien."

Ponk reaches out with his hand, wiping the tears from Sam's cheeks. "I'm sorry," he whispers.

"So am I," Sam replies.

He doesn't know where it all went wrong.

He doesn't know how to fix this.

He holds Ponk's hand and wills himself not to cry again. He has to be strong for Ponk.

The boy he saw today was not the boy he knows.

Sam fears that the boy he knows, his Tommy is already lost.

Chapter End Notes

So Grian knows the truth, Karl is suffering and the SBI have been imprisoned ;)

How are we feeling?

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

We're back!!!

TW// graphic depicts of torture (both physical and psychological) - Skip to the paragraph starting with 'Dream' if you don't want to read - mention of major character death, blood, injury, violence, mention of past child abuse, mention of past brainwashing, threatening behaviour, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The Warden does what he has to do to keep his prison safe.

Beef has taken Quackity to a holding cell in the outer-most region section of the Vault. He will wait for a Russian representative to collect him as Quackity has some warrants over there.

Jack tries to immediately escape. He's quickly subdued but nothing seems to stop his incessant attempts. A more reinforced cell is needed.

Darien doesn't expect him to struggle on the walkway. He tries to stop him from falling but Jack tumbles into the lava below.

"At least we don't need to worry about more escapes," Pandora mutters and Darien smiles.

Technoblade tries to escape his all white cell. Sensory deprivation is the best way to subdue a man with such an impressive fighting skill. By keeping him like that, his mind is easier to manipulate into submission.

He keeps fighting and so the numbing agent is injected into a cannula in his hand. Within a couple of minutes, the restraints aren't needed as he stares blankly at the white walls, silent and still.

After that, Technoblade becomes a model prisoner so long as the the numbing agent runs in his bloodstream.

Wilbur will not accept the muzzle across his lips. He finds a way to unclip it or tear it from his face. Even when he's subdued with the sprays of acid to keep him from the staff entering his cell to feed him, he spits and hisses, trying to compel them and lashing out with his hands when his voice grows hoarse.

He's a hassle and, with gentle prodding and advice from Pandora, Darien ends up dealing with Wilbur himself.

An hour later, Darien leaves the cell with a needle and thread, dripping blood. A day later, he has to return. And a day after that.

But from then on, Wilbur remains in the corner of his cell, quiet and complicit.

Philza, surprisingly enough, is the calmest out of them. Well, at the beginning. He asks about his sons and Darien has no reason to lie to him.

The truth, however, hurts, especially when ignorance in these types of situations is bliss.

He lashes out, nearly breaks out. So Darien has to resort to extreme measures.

His wings are clipped, a collar locked around his throat and arms spread by the metal bar connecting from neck to wrist. When someone enters the cell, the collar, which is connected to the ceiling by a reinforced rope, is pulled taut so that if he wishes to try and fight, he is pulled into a hanging position.

With the new restraints, Philza becomes calm and blank.

Darien counts it as a win.

Dream wonders if instantly stabbing his uncle would upset Puffy. By the glare that's steadily growing more deadly on her face, he doesn't think so.

"Project Insight is about bringing peace," Schlatt says, leaning back in his chair. "Don't you want peace, Puffy?"

"I want you to shut the hell up," Drista mutters under her breath and Foolish snorts. He quickly turns it into a cough when both of Puffy and Schlatt look his way.

"Putting guns on the side of Helicarriers--"

"Blood needs to be spilt to create a better future." Schlatt interrupts. "Wars happen because we're fighting for survival and this, these Helicarriers, are a way to stop war from ever happening again."

"By killing a bunch of people?" Foolish asks and Schlatt rolls his eyes.

"If you could stop wars, stop world hunger, stop poverty and destitution, wouldn't you do anything you can to achieve that?"

"Not when it's genocide," Foolish snaps back, lightning crackling in his eyes. "Now when it's your world we'd be living in."

"Foolish," Puffy says, softly.

“No,” Schlatt says, reaching over to pat her hand. “My nephew has every right to be angry with me. I was never around during their childhood-“

“You think this is because we never saw you?” Drista asks, eyebrows raised. “How deluded are you? You were working for, and trying to rule, the Red Room, a place that kidnapped Dream and tried to kidnap me. A place is that turns kids into killers. But you seriously think we’re angry about not seeing you?”

“And with you alive again,” Foolish adds, “we honestly believe you’re working for them now.”

Schlatt sighs. “I’m not working for the Red Room. I’m working for a higher power. And anyway, if I was working for them, why wouldn’t I be trying to sell off my nephew?”

“You try it, you die,” Dream says, quietly, calmly, every bit the Huntsman Spider he is.

Schlatt laughs at him, actually laughs at him; his red eyes shining. “I don’t need you, Dream. My employer doesn’t need you but it will be creating a better, brighter future. One I hope you’ll all be joining me in.”

“I thought we were clear we didn’t-“ Drista starts but Puffy shakes her head.

“Schlatt,” she says, head tilting. “You want to build a better future? That’s it?”

Schlatt rolls his eyes. “Obviously. But this is a one-time offer. You don’t want it? Fuck off.”

“You’re building a better future through bloodshed,” Foolish accuses. “Killing innocents-“

“S.H.I.E.L.D. has created this lovely new algorithm that the Helicarriers are synced to. They’re also linked to a network of targeting satellites, which help to choose who is a possible threat and who isn’t.”

Dream stares at him. “Hold up,” he says, stopping Puffy before she can say anything. “Project Insight is three Helicarriers that are programmed to kill anyone that could potentially, possibly be a threat? That’s me. That’s all of us. That’s the Syndicate and Las Nevadas-“

He cuts himself off before he can say his brothers, George, any one of the agents and recruits that survived. They’re all active threats, really. It’s not a possibility that they all have the power to take on an entire country and destabilise it within a couple of weeks.

“Not if you’re with me,” Schlatt says. “So long as you stand be me, you’re safe.”

“This isn’t peace. This is removing free will.” Puffy breathes and Schlatt sighs.

“Puff-Puff, where’s your ambition? This is going to happen whether you fucking like it or not. Why be on the side of the losers?”

“I’ve been on the side of killers before,” Dream says, remembering the Room for what it was: fear and death and blood and pain. Fighting to survive and fighting some more. Starving and

being beaten and worrying that the next guard to sneak into their dorms would choose him.

He remembers George finding him, finally feeling like he can fight for more than just himself. He remembers the first time he ever knew what love was, what it still is.

He remembers finding Sapnap, so angry and aggressive and unwilling to backdown. He remembers those brief smiles and joyous, infectious laughter on their missions together.

He remembers finding Tommy, as calculating as George, as powerful as Dream, as aggressive as Sapnap. He remembers finding the boy in the Huntsman Spider, watching him grow and become a person, a human being.

He fits Schlatt a look that is all Huntsman Spider. "I don't ever want to be on that side again," he finishes.

Puffy grins at him, pride burning in her eyes. Drista gives him a rare, honest smile. Foolish leans over to clap him on the back.

Schlatt studies him for a long moment and then asks, "I assume you're all agreeing with him?"

"A culling won't make a better world," Puffy says, reaching for him. She grabs his hand, squeezing even as she winces. "You're freezing but look- please, this isn't worth it."

Schlatt pulls his hand away. "I understand. Well, I fucking don't but I understand."

"Good," Puffy says. "Thank you."

"Will you stop them?" Drista asks. "The Helicarriers."

"They're going up in the sky," he says, leaning forward in his chair. "They're not going to stop the activation."

"Not unless we convince them," Puffy says and Schlatt snorts.

"You want to try and convince multiple world leaders that this is wrong, when they've already decided it's right? Good luck, Puff-Puff. You're going to fucking need it."

"How long until they go up?" Foolish asks.

"They're going up in another two weeks, give or take."

"That's enough time," Puffy says and Dream watches as they start to plan, something off about the situation.

He doesn't trust Schlatt at all. In fact, he would go as far as saying that Schlatt is one of the most untrustworthy people he knows.

And maybe Dream is a little off his game. Maybe, all he can think about is Tommy back in L'Manberg, worrying and probably allowing the Huntsman to take over.

Sapnap should be with him, making sure he's alright. George-

Dream doesn't know what's happening with George.

"There's a meeting tomorrow," Schlatt says and Drista immediately complains because she wants to see The Tidal Basin and Foolish wants to check out some of the museums.

"I'll go with you," Dream says when Puffy meets his eyes, widening her own as if to gain his favour. Not that he would miss the chance to make sure she's okay while finding angles to work on the people there.

He's an assassin: understanding people and exploiting their weaknesses is his job description.

"Perfect," Schlatt says and Dream tries not to let paranoia and unease overwhelm him.

Tommy spends a few days with the knowledge Sam gave him, going over it, checking it out. He has basic floor plans and a brief understanding of Pandora.

Niki tells him that she remembers the power dampener the Warden had behind him from the Room.

Spifey was younger than her but she remembers how even the strongest of Spiders and Widows couldn't use their abilities against them. And when it came down to a physical fight, just like how they were trained, he could easily hold his own.

Tubbo helps with Tommy's issue of navigating around Pandora.

When Ranboo teleports to his house to check on Enderchest his cat, he takes Tubbo, who spends an hour working on a virus to shut Pandora down.

Tommy doesn't wait for Tubbo to be done. He simply works on his own angle.

One of those being Boomer.

The man works at Pandora's Vault and after searching through all of his social medias and tracking his location down, Tommy breaks into his apartment. It's a simple design but not plain and it doesn't take long for Tommy to find paperwork relating to the prison.

He hears the key in the lock, debates leaving but decides not to. His mask is hiding his lower face and his hood is up. All that remains are his cold eyes.

It's always best to get a first-hand opinion.

Tommy leans back on the windowsill, grabs the knife from his boot and leaves the paperwork scattered before him on the floor. He starts flipping the blade, keeping his posture relaxed.

The door opens, then closes, Boomer humming under his breath.

There's a sound like a bag being dropped. There's a rustle of fabric as a coat is removed and hung up. Keys click and then drop, probably onto the table by the door.

Tommy waits, the methodical throw and catch of his knife calming him.

Boomer walks down his hallway, past the door's threshold and into the open kitchen and living room. He doesn't notice Tommy. Not yet.

He walks over to his fridge, flicking the lights on as he shuts the fridge door, opening his cupboard for a glass. Turning the sink on, he fills his glass up with water before finally turning.

Their eyes meet.

Tommy tilts his head, catching the handle of his dagger.

The glass slips from Boomer's hand and shatters on the tiled floor, spilling water and glass everywhere.

"Don't run," Tommy says, quietly, calmly. "You'll cut your feet and I'll have to stab you."

Boomer swallows and nods, shakily. "What are you doing in my apartment?"

"You've been working at Pandora's Vault for a while now, haven't you, Dylan?" Tommy says, smirk gracing his lips when Boomer shudders at his real name.

"Hey, I don't--"

"Boomer," Tommy interrupts and the man freezes, a deer caught in headlights. Tommy won't admit this out-loud but he's missed the power of being a Huntsman Spider. "I don't want to hurt you. In fact, based off of your records, you're a pretty decent guy. But someone hurt my fucking family and someone is going to fucking die because of it. I'm guessing you don't want that to be you?"

Boomer rapidly shakes his head. "Yeah, no. I want to live, thanks."

Tommy smiles. It's not a nice smile, not a friendly one. It's a wolf's, a dangerous, vicious grin that promises bloodshed.

"I only need a couple things from you and from there, we go our separate ways." Tommy raises his hand to point the dagger straight at him. "You tell anyone and I'll fucking gut you, man, okay? No open casket for you."

Boomer gulps, holds up his hand in a surrender. "Yeah, whatever you say. I'd rather there be no caskets if you catch my drift."

Tommy snorts, stands. "I need your uniform--"

"Hey, I'm not stripping in front of a minor!"

Tommy laughs at that. He sounds more like himself than he has in days.

“Ew, gross. Fuck off. Not the one you’re wearing right now, dickhead. I meant like- like a spare?” Boomer raises his eyebrows at him. Tommy sighs. “Please tell me you have a fucking spare.”

Boomer keeps the guilty expression before laughing, nodding. “Yeah, man, don’t worry.”

“Oh thank fucking god,” Tommy breathes, then frowns at him. “You’re not panicking. Why aren’t you panicking?”

Boomer shrugs. “Maybe I’m in shock. Plus, I don’t want to die so I’m just going to do what you tell me to.”

“Good,” Tommy smiles at him. “I wish all interrogations and shit was as easy as this.”

“This isn’t your first time? I should’ve guessed.”

Tommy snorts before growing serious. “I need your uniform and your keycard to get in. You hand those over and call in sick for a week: we’re good. So long as you don’t tell anyone I was here, you don’t lose your life. Yeah?”

“My keycard only gets you into the first level,” Boomer says with a frown before blinking. “Unless... unless you only-“

“I just need to get in the door,” Tommy says with a calm smile. “Everything else is covered, big man. Now, hand over the goods.”

Boomer nods, steps away from the counter, eyes to the ground so that he doesn’t cut his feet on the glass. Tommy watches him walk to the hallway, to his bedroom and then calls his name.

“I know you have a gun in your safe,” Tommy says. “Don’t do anything fucking stupid, okay? I’d rather not bundle up your corpse in your duvet.”

Boomer rolls his eyes at him. “You’re fucking scary, dude. You know that?”

He’s gone for a couple of minutes and returns to put the folded uniform into his duffel bag. He stands, and holds the bag out to Tommy.

He checks through it: issued-taser, shirt, trousers, tie, mask that sits across the lower-half of his face, boots, and a blue keycard.

“Thanks,” Tommy mutters, zipping the bag up. He brandishes his knife again. “A week off. No one knows about this.”

“Understood.” Boomer says. As Tommy gets closer to the window, Boomer says, “Pandora will block you the minute you try to access anything. The Warden isn’t going to like you rummaging around there.”

Tommy doesn't even look back as he laughs a chilling laugh. "The Warden made a mistake when he didn't arrest me. I'm going to be his worst fucking nightmare."

With that, he hoists himself out of the window, to the fire escape, and disappears into the darkness.

(After cleaning up the glass and eating his pasta, Boomer calls in sick with food poisoning. The person before him had a darkness to his blue eyes, an anger that Boomer has seen in the faces of all of the family members who have their loved ones locked up in the Vault.

Boomer doesn't have the power to stop the Warden.

He thinks that the person before him definitely does.)

Grey waits until xe's mostly alone and Sean is in his cell before he says to Milena, who has been lurking at xis shoulder ever since she showed up, "so Dark didn't help."

She scoffs, eyes never leaving Nadezhda's face as she colours on the floor of the lab. "We couldn't have predicted Karl would know he was coming."

"He is getting stronger," Grey murmurs, remembering seeing the man briefly to hand over more power enhancers. He was curled up, face peaceful as he slept off the change, skin unnaturally white.

"Do you know how to access Dark's cell?" Milena asks and Grey shakes xis head.

"No one does expect the main three. He's too volatile right now and everyone's concerned that the threat on Amy won't work if they push."

Milena hums. "If we get that door open, Dark can do most of the work."

"Can you access it?" Xe asks, curiously and her lips twitch.

"Probably but there's too many guards and I have to look after her."

Nadezhda continues her drawing with a smile. Milena leans back against the counter, arms crossed over her chest.

Ever since Amy's phone call, Grey knew xe needed someone on xis side. Milena, despite the fact she was here to be xis antidote, was xis best choice.

Especially when xe watched a few guard try and separate Milena and her child, only for her to throw her jacket over her daughter's face before killing anyone that touched Nadezhda.

Milena doesn't want to be here as much as Grey doesn't.

So Grey offered her an alternative and Milena, who xe found out was a Black Widow with the ability to freeze organic things (and so blocked xim from rotting anything), took to xis

plan with ease.

But Dark was locked up the second he appeared because Karl had seen him. So their plan fell through.

Not that it's stopped Milena's planning.

"Mama?" Nadezhda asks in Russian, looking up from her crayons and paper. "When's papa coming back?"

Milena shrugs, dropping to a crouch before her daughter. "I don't know, Nadia, but he'll be back soon."

Alexander is a simple man, Grey has found. Alexander doesn't interfere or push boundaries. He also seems to be reeling over the Black Widow admission.

It probably wasn't helped when Squid jumped from his tank to hug her, smiling down at Nadezhda with a shocked expression.

"You have a little one, Lena?" He'd asked and Milena had laughed, running her fingers through Nadezhda's hair, blood still on her shirt and cheek.

"She's innocent," is all she had replied with. "I'm keeping her that way."

Grey knows now what that means. Nadezhda never had to experience the horrors of the Red Room because Milena's marriage to Alexander, and his easy silence on the bodies they dropped off at his morgue, made her valuable. Milena swore that if they took her daughter for the program, she would leave Alexander and spread word of the Room's work.

"When can we go home?" The little girl asks and Milena smiles at her, tucking a piece of hair behind her ear.

"I don't know but we'll be home soon," she whispers.

Milena meets Grey's eyes. They're too intense and she looks away.

The bomb is gone from his chest - it's not needed unless he's going to see Sean - but he can still feel its weight.

Grey wants to go home, too.

He sees it on the TV in his hotel room. Reporters discussing the story dropped, along with the video, of the Syndicate being led away from armoured vans.

He watches the brief struggle, the way the newscaster cuts the feed before they can see, what they're describing, as the Warden killing a Hero, killing Vulpes.

Fundy.

Dream swallows.

It's half-six in the morning - something the Room taught cannot be broken - and Dream gets dressed as quickly as possible. He leans more towards his combat gear - even if Puffy doesn't want to return, he's going to L'Manberg to check - and brushes his teeth while securing knives and guns in place.

Puffy said to pack lightly when it came to his weapons. Dream listened, he did.

That doesn't mean he's not prepared.

Once kitted up, he leaves his hotel room and stalks down the hall to Puffy's.

He pauses before knocking sharply. Within a minute, he's met with her drowsy expression and messy, white bed-head.

"Yes, duckling?"

His lips twitch at that term, one she uses occasionally for her children. She rarely uses it for him - he's not really been her child, has he? He may have been her's first but he will always be the Room's - but it always makes him smile when she does.

"The Warden has arrested the Syndicate and Fundy is possibly dead."

Puffy's face becomes as white as her hair. "I'll be out in twenty minutes, tell Foolish we'll be heading down to L'Manberg and to watch over Drista."

He salutes her, slightly mockingly, as the door shuts, does as he's told before heading down to breakfast. He sips his coffee and sure enough, twenty minutes later, she's eating her breakfast and swallowing her coffee in a one single gulp.

They head to her car. He gets in the passenger: unlike George, Dream doesn't mind driving but it seems Puffy needs to do this, to focus on driving so that she doesn't think too heavily about Fundy.

It's been a couple of days since their talk with Schlatt - Dream still hasn't had any contact with George, Sapnap or Tommy - and it doesn't seem like Puffy is making any progress with shutting the Helicarriers down.

Dream suggested blackmail: he's found out that two on the security council are having affairs with one another, one has a hidden criminal record and another has been sleeping with the pool boy. Puffy had laughed but disagreed.

She wants to do this as legitimately as possible.

They start driving through D.C.'s streets in silence. Not an uncomfortable one, just a foreboding one.

They don't know if Fundy is dead or alive. Dream doesn't know whether Tommy is coping.

The drive is quiet and calm.

Until it isn't.

Dream doesn't know what it is that tells him something is wrong. Maybe it's the training, maybe it's the week-long paranoia that won't leave him, maybe it's just being raised as a child assassin.

Either way, he tilts his head just enough to see the police car window roll down and a gun appear as a man aims at their car.

It's a split second of decision before his fist is clenching and the ground ripples under the police car's tyres. He grabs the wheel from Puffy's hands and twists it to a sharp right.

A shot rings out, shattering the glass of the side mirror.

Immediately, other surrounding police cars hit their sirens, officers leaning from their windows to shoot.

"What the-" Puffy shouts.

"Ambush," Dream says. "Keep driving. Are these bullet-"

The back window shatters. Dream pushes at Puffy's shoulder, keeping her head from any bullet. With his spare hand, he clenches his fist.

The tarmac under the police car rips up, throwing the vehicle back, making it flip into another car.

"Dream-"

He meets her terrified gaze. "I'm going to keep you safe," he promises. "Keep driving."

She swallows, nods, focuses back on the road. Dream grabs his gun from his waistband, looks out of his window.

"This is Schlatt," she says, swerving as he shifts the earth under the police cars chasing them. "No one else wants me dead."

"Yeah, I doubt the Warden wants you locked up," Dream replies, rolling the window down.

"Call Foolish, get him and Drista out of there," Puffy instructs and only then does Dream realise the streetlights are conveniently changing so that they can drive through undisturbed.

Dream reaches for her phone in the cup holder.

He takes his eyes off of their surroundings for less than a second.

When he looks up, there's a figure standing in the empty road, dressed head-to-toe in black. A hood, mask covering their nose, mouth and jaw, and goggles hide their identity.

It's not Huntsman gear. Not even Widow gear.

It's something different, something he's not seen before. There's no brand to say who the person is associated with. Just a single person standing there.

That's when Dream clocks the gun - it looks like a rifle but also somewhat like a rocket launcher, Dream's too far to be sure - and the way the figure's arm raises.

He pushes Puffy's head to the side, ducking down to avoid the possible bullet to the brain.

But the windshield doesn't shatter.

Dream looks up just to see the figure slide smoothly to the side as something detonates beneath them. Sparks fly and thick smoke surrounds them.

The car is thrown upwards before flipping.

All while the figure watches.

Chapter End Notes

I am causing chaos :)

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

This chapter is the whole reason this fic exists :)

TW// graphic depictions of torture, psychological torture, sewing of the mouth, aftermath of torture, scars, self harm, brief mention of suicidal ideation, blood, injury, violence, death, brief mention of hallucinations, past abuse, illegal imprisonment, current abuse, hanging, non-consensual drugging, brief mention of dismemberment, throat-slitting, body horror, gore, major character death, minor character death, immolation, robot death, weaponry, swearing

Be careful lads.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He stands at the Badland's Port, checking over his weapons, making sure Tubbo's flash drive is tucked into his pocket. His wings span out, wide and beautiful. The early sun hits them, making it look like they're on fire as the red flickers into deep oranges and dark yellows.

Rolling his shoulders, he flexes them, never more thankful that Phil has helped get his speed and stamina up.

Before he leaves, he closes his eyes and tries to reach out to them.

He hasn't needed to tap into his ability to pull his family from their location to him. He may be able to primarily summon his brothers but he knows he can summon the others.

He focuses as hard as he can but the connection is thin at best. It must be the power dampener - Spifey, Niki had said over dinner - blocking them from him.

He wonders if he should try his brothers but ultimately settles on not bothering. Sapnap and George are somewhere in Europe, possibly even Russia: he can't pull their attention away when it might be saving their lives. And Dream is dealing with S.H.I.E.L.D., Tommy doesn't want to make him lose focus.

Once he's double-checked his weapons, he grabs the mask, and the security guard's shirt and springs up into the skies.

His wings flap, finding the air currents and gliding over the calm sea. He keeps as close to the water as possible to avoid detection and within minutes, he comes across the hulking mass of metal there.

Pandora's Vault, in all it's glory.

He's thankful for the speed and ability his wings give him.

He flies up the side of the prison, wings flapping hard and fast to push him up.

Tommy will admit, he's a little breathless. Flying still isn't his speciality but he's got this far: no turning back now.

Once atop the landing pad, he presses his wings back into his skin, slipping the mask over his face and the shirt over his shoulders. Hundreds of crows sit there, watching him. Looking around, he sees the hangers containing Quinjets and helicopters.

That's his getaway plan.

He walks as he does the buttons up on his shirt, pressing the keycard to the keypad and pulling the door open when the green light flashes.

Tommy steps into Pandora's Vault, away from the cool, ocean breeze and into the grey hallways of the prison.

He displays Boomer's name tag proudly as he walks through the winding hallways. It reminds him of a labyrinth but he's memorised all of the floor plans, he's not going to get lost here. He doesn't need Ariadne's thread to lead him around.

He wonders if there's a Minotaur he needs to kill.

Tommy finds the outer control room easily, nodding back whenever a guard nods at him. Entering the room, briefly looking over the coffee mugs and wall filled with screens, he takes out his gun with the silencer on, shuts the door and shoots at the three guards.

They slump in their chairs, blood dripping from the holes in their skulls.

Tommy walks past them, fingers grabbing at the flash drive Tubbo gave him.

"Boomer?" A voice from the ceiling asks as Tommy pushes the flash drive in. "What are you doing?"

"Hello, Pandora," Tommy says, pressing the enter button on the keyboard to accept the flash drive. "Piece of advice? When arresting people, make sure the family members watching aren't trained assassins."

"What-" Pandora's voice starts to glitch and Tommy mentally thanks Tubbo. He watches as the lights flicker and the building seems to groan before a shrill alarm cuts through the silence, red lights flashing above.

Tommy rolls his eyes, turns to leave when the door opens.

Before him, stands a man that's got to be seven foot and is built like a tank. Horns curl atop his head and hooved feet hold him up as Tommy scans the man, up and down.

“Shit,” Tommy mutters, quickly pocketing his gun as he dodges the hand trying to grab him.

To the universe watching, he would like to say, he was joking about the Minotaur.

“Come here,” the man hisses and Tommy thinks this is Beef, one of the guards Sam mentioned.

Beef backs him into a corner and Tommy blinks up at him, holding his hands out in a surrender. “Okay! Okay! I’ve got my fucking hands up!”

Beef rolls his eyes, reaches for him. Tommy counts the seconds down. “Good. Now, how did you get-“

Beef grabs Tommy’s arm. The dagger up his other sleeve slips to Tommy’s hand. He allows the momentum of Beef tugging him forward to slice at the man’s stomach.

Beef chokes, hand releasing Tommy’s arm. He throws the dagger, catching it with his other hand and jabs it straight into his neck before ripping it away.

Blood immediately starts spurting from the wound and Tommy darts away from it, not wanting to bloody his uniform this quickly.

Then, with a move he learnt from Hannah, from watching the Widows, he hooks an arm around the man’s shoulders and twists himself, curling low to swipe the legs out from under Beef. Gravity pulls him down and he is slammed into the white floor.

Tommy takes his dagger and slits his throat.

It’s over in a few seconds as Beef goes from choking on his blood to death. Tommy taps him down, grabbing the keycards needed to enter the inner circles of the Vault.

He can scrap his other plan of hunting specific worker’s down for their keycards.

He stands, checks over his unsoiled uniform and leaves the control room.

Around him, the hallways are chaos. Security guards shout orders as armed guards rush with riot shields. Tommy blends in with the crowds, hunting for his family.

Quackity’s cell is empty.

So is Jack’s.

A burning starts in his chest, angry and fierce.

His gut twists and he’s about to continue when he clocks the cell numbers. One-sixty.

Tommy walks down down the hallway, coming upon one-six-three. By the door, a single name is displayed: Frank.

Tommy uses his keycard to open the door. A man looks up from his bed. His face is haggard - probably alcoholism, if the yellow sclera is anything to go by - but there's a meanness to his gaze, one that reminds Tommy of the guards at the Room who used to like beating the recruits.

"Purple sends his regards," Tommy says, and the man's face whitens at the name.

Tommy lifts his gun and shoots him in the head.

He turns to leave when a voice calls for him. "Tommy, right? I'm Alyssa! Dream knows me!"

He walks to the next cell, opens the door and the woman before him grins at the sight of him. "Oh thank god," she says. "Being around you: I can finally see!"

"I have somewhere to be," he says, a little coldly, the Huntsman firmly in control and she nods.

"That's fine! Can you just--"

Someone rounds the corner, catches Tommy talking to a prisoner.

Tommy moves before the guard can even raise his weapon.

Kicking the legs out from under him, he shoots the guard in the head. Another guard appears and Tommy snaps the gun from their hand, grabbing their arm and flipping them over his shoulder before shooting them in the head.

He waits, listening to the sound of the alarm but no more footsteps. He straightens and faces a wide-eyed Alyssa.

"Can I what?" He asks and she points to the cell next to hers.

He opens the door, making eye-contact with a man, who looks like he has had his horns cut.

"Callahan?" Alyssa breathes and then falls into his arms. He holds her back tightly, looking at Tommy with slightly dazed eyes.

Tommy clears his throat. "I'm just going to--"

"You're the cure," she says to him, pulling away from Callahan. "It needs you, if not it cannot feast but you can destroy it. You can save them."

Tommy frowns at her, mental clock ticking down as Pandora fights against the virus Tubbo has released on her. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"The agents," she says and every muscle locks. "It is bending them to its will but you can block its power. You're Life."

"Look--"

“Tommy,” Alyssa says, stepping closer. “I see you, amongst burning rubble. Before you, an old friend stands. She offers her hand and you... you pause. Then everything falls black but that future is changing, expanding, shifting. In some, it consumes you. In others, everything turns golden.”

Tommy’s frown deepens. He’s losing time but he cannot move. “That doesn’t help.”

“You’re Life,” she repeats. “Your touch heals.”

The lights flicker and Callahan nods at the corridor. Alyssa smiles at him before looking back at Tommy.

“Save your family. We’ll be waiting on the ‘jet.’”

Tommy spends a second watching them leave before he continues on his journey.

He walks into the first inner layer of the prison, using one of Beef’s keycards, the blue one. The guards running barely glance in his direction, willing to accept that someone in his uniform should be there.

People rarely like questioning someone who looks like they should be there.

Finding Wilbur’s cell is quite easy.

There’s a control room next to it and Tommy doesn’t hesitate to shoot at the guards sitting and watching the cell on the many screens before them. He notices the feeding tube next to a needle and thread. Blood has stained the wooden countertop a deep crimson. Tommy’s hand twitches at the sight.

Once they’re dead, he steps to the door and uses the keycard to open it.

Tommy doesn’t know what he expects when he sees Wilbur. He thinks of the brief time he spent in a prison, the white walls and disgusting toilets and scratchy beds.

This isn’t it.

When the door opens, a figure in the corner flinches back, curled up making low, pleading sounds. Tommy looks around the cell, white walls, a single blanket and toilet and then looks to the figure.

It’s Wilbur. There’s no mistaking that.

Dirty, brown curls pop out behind knees pressed tightly to his chest. He’s still making that whining noise and Tommy pockets his gun, holds his hands up.

“Wil?” He says, softly, wincing at the Russian accent lining his words. He focuses to make sure he speaks only his familiar British one. “It’s Tommy. I’m not here to hurt you. I’m here to get you out.”

His Russian accent still lines some of his words. It should unnerve him.

It doesn't. He's not Tommy here. He's Huntsman Spider.

But for Wilbur, he'll be whoever he needs. He can be Tommy, if only for a moment.

"Wil?" He asks again and Wilbur finally looks up at him. The sight makes Tommy's blood run cold.

Raised skin on his nose and cheek, as though he's been sprayed with a harsh chemical. His eyes are wide and panicked. His arms are locked tightly around his legs, protecting his torso.

That's not the worse thing about him, though.

His lips have been sewn together.

There is a thread stopping him from opening his mouth.

A burning builds in Tommy's gut as he slowly approaches, dropping before Wilbur. He keeps his hands in front of him as it sizzles and hisses inside of him.

"I can cut it away," Tommy says, Russian accent harsher. "Nod if you want me to?"

Wilbur looks at him with that fearful gaze and then nods. Tommy smiles at him.

"I'm going to get my knife, okay?" He says and Wilbur nods again so Tommy slowly reaches for his dagger.

This is dangerous and stupid. The door is open, the alarm is blaring but Tommy needs to do this for Wilbur. And god help anyone that tries to interrupt this.

Before he can get close, Wilbur's hand darts up to grab his wrist. They both freeze, Tommy keeping the instinctive need to lash out from being grabbed suddenly away.

Wilbur nods once again, hand still gripping his wrist and Tommy raises his other hand to Wilbur's jaw. He tilts his head up.

"This is going to hurt," Tommy breathes. "And it's going to bleed. Ready?"

Wilbur nods again and Tommy raises the blade to the thread. He swallows, head steady and cuts.

He tries to make it as quick as possible, other hand bracing Wilbur's face so that he doesn't flinch back. His eyes squeeze shut at the tugging sensation but his hand doesn't make any move to stop Tommy.

Within half a minute, the thread has been cut and Wilbur opens and closes his mouth as blood drips from his lips.

Tommy doesn't move away and Wilbur doesn't let go.

"Are you okay?" He whispers and Wilbur blinks at him.

“I’m so cold,” Wilbur murmurs back, voice hoarse and dry.

Tommy swallows. “Who did this to you?”

Because there’s a name that needs to be added to his ledger. It’s a name he will add with a smile and one he will not need to wash out.

“The Warden,” Wilbur replies, his voice cracking. Tears gather in his eyes and he leans his head forward, onto Tommy’s shoulder. Tommy shifts closer, hand curling around the back of Wilbur’s neck as he struggles not to cry.

As Wilbur snuffles, the burning increases inside of Tommy.

“You’re here,” Wilbur breathes and Tommy nods, holds him tighter. “You’re real.”

“I couldn’t leave my big brother,” Tommy replies, evenly. “Could I?”

Wilbur presses closer. “He killed Fundy.”

Tommy tightens his hold on him, the burning increasing. “Let’s get you out of here, okay? Can you stand?”

Wilbur can stand, so long as he’s leaning heavily on Tommy or the wall. Tommy takes it slow, even as the Huntsman is trying to think of ways to make this quicker.

Wilbur is skinner than he left and he clearly hasn’t been doing much exercise. He’s quiet and weak and Tommy can feel the rage build.

“I can’t find Jack or Quackity,” he tells him and Wilbur shrugs.

“They were separated from us. I don’t know where they are.”

That sends him into a coughing fit and Tommy shifts his weight, helping him to lean against the wall. He darts back to the control room, hunting through the mini fridge under the desk. He grabs a water bottle and sprints back, handing it to Wilbur and watching him eagerly drink.

Tommy wants to ask how long it’s been since he’s had the ability to drink on his own. He doesn’t.

He’s a Huntsman Spider.

He’s seen torture, suffered through his fair share, inflicted it when needed. Wilbur will break when their lives aren’t at risk and he will either succumb to the horror or find a way to rise above it.

Either way, Wilbur will never be the Wilbur before Pandora’s Vault.

They continue down the corridor and Tommy doesn’t try to be incognito, not with Wilbur staggering beside him. Any guard that looks at him is cut down or shot, Tommy collecting

the guns from their bodies so he doesn't run out of ammunition.

"You're kind-of terrifying," Wilbur mutters as Tommy flips a guard, stabbing another in the neck and shooting him in the head.

"Thanks," Tommy replies, drily as they approach Techno's cell.

Tommy leaves Wilbur propped up against the wall as he enters the control room, shooting the guards in their chairs. He takes note of the fridge, the door being glass showing off pots of what look like clear medicine. The needles beside it make his stomach twist.

He opens the door and is met with an all white room, blindingly white. Techno is lying on a cot in the middle of the room, pink hair spanning behind his head, eyes open but unseeing, breath ragged and one of his hands is covered in white bandages.

The room reminds him of the isolation chamber back in the Room.

The one that broke some of the recruits. The one that was used as punishment and as a learning exercise: sensory deprivation as a torture method is extremely efficient.

The burning builds and builds and builds.

He's going to make the Warden hurt.

"Techno?" He calls, loudly, sharply. "Technoblade, it's me, Tommy."

The man doesn't even twitch. Tommy pockets his gun.

"Tech," he shouts. "I need you to do something to let me know you're aware."

The man doesn't blink, doesn't move.

Tommy brushes a hand over his wrist. Techno's eyes flash before he lurches off of the bed, eyes wide in panic, in fear. He tries to tackle Tommy but he's weak, skinny like Wilbur, and Tommy is a Huntsman.

He flips the man, manhandles him until he has his wrists pressed to his chest. "Technoblade Minecraft," he says, clearly, Russian accent filling his words. "You used to participate in illegal fights. You have a weird obsession with potatoes. Wilbur is your brother and Phil is your dad and Tubbo and Ranboo are waiting for you. Tech, it's me. It's Tommy."

He's not above begging and even though he fought Beef and won without breaking a sweat, he's panting now.

Tommy knows how bad it can be. He knows how he scratched up his own arms to feel something and he can see the same marks, the same dried blood on Techno.

Tommy survived the isolation chamber. He doesn't know how long he was there - George theorised it's around three months - but he got through the way his mind nearly melted. The

sleepless nights and brief hallucinations, the way he screamed himself hoarse just to hear something, hurt himself just to feel something.

Tommy is trained to cope with it.

Techno isn't.

"Please," he whispers and Techno finally meets his gaze.

"Theseus?" He mumbles back, voice ruined and Tommy nods.

"Yeah, big man. It's me. I'm here. I'm getting you out of here."

"How?" Techno asks and Tommy smiles at him, slowly lets his wrists go. He finally notices the cannula in his non-bandaged hand, the one that has a slight tremor to it.

"I have my ways," he says, helping Techno to stand.

He's more shaky than Wilbur and Tommy has to stabilise himself to make sure they both don't tumble to the white floor.

"Can you walk?" He asks, calmly and Techno huffs an agreement, even as he shuffles along, as if he can't feel his legs.

The injections and the cannula suddenly connect in Tommy's mind: a numbing agent injected into his blood so that even his body doesn't feel real to him.

It's an extreme version; Tommy has only ever experienced that once and that was because his punishment couldn't last a month, but a few days. He had a mission to attend.

Tommy hauls Techno from the cell and Wilbur collapses against his brother. They end up holding each other up.

"You're real," Wilbur whispers and Techno hums.

"So are you."

Tommy lets them have this moment, of Techno holding Wilbur like he will shatter with too much pressure, or Wilbur sniffling into Techno's shoulder like he's surprised he's alive.

But they're running out of time and Tommy really doesn't want to try his luck with Pandora.

"Let's go get Phil," he says, as gently as possible and then both pull away - keeping the contact of Techno's arm over Wilbur's shoulders, Wilbur's arm wrapped around Techno's ribs - following as he walks.

Tommy continues to shoot and stab any guard that gets close. It seems most have chosen to run rather than fight.

Those are the smart ones.

They arrive at the innermost layer of Pandora's Vault and Tommy uses his yellow keycard to enter.

They stand in a lobby, a single desk in the corner, facing a large metal door. Tommy can spot Phil in the cameras and his blood boils.

That burning reaches a crescendo and his ears start to ring.

His wings have been clipped, his head is tilting back as there is a collar around his throat. He looks like a man about to be hanged.

"I remember you," the Warden says from the middle of the room. There is a trident in his hand, face almost identical to Sam's but he has shorter hair. He's taller and more built. Tommy meets his gaze, the Huntsman easily taking over. "You were there when I arrested them."

Tommy tilts his head to the side, eyes blazing. "Do you know who I am?" He asks, mildly curious. He doesn't reach for his gun as he steps closer.

"No," he replies and Tommy hums.

"You took everything from me," he says, accent firmly Russian.

"You mean them?" The Warden spits, brandishing his trident, pointing it straight at Wilbur and Techno. "They're Villains, criminals! They're not your family, they're murderers."

At that, Tommy outright laughs.

"If you have a problem with murderers, you're definitely going to have a fucking problem with me," Tommy says, grin as sharp as the knife in his sleeve. "What do you know of Department X, Darien? What do you know of the Red Room?"

The way his hand on the trident twitches tells Tommy he knows exactly what he's talking about.

"Who told you about it?" Tommy says, taking a step closer. "Was it S.H.I.E.L.D.?"

Another twitch, Tommy smirks.

"They do that, you know," he informs him, almost casually. "They like to be amongst the most powerful. When Stalin was around, some of the Spiders and Widows used to work as his bodyguards. I've even heard the stories of some Spiders working for the American President."

Tommy steps closer. "Someone told us you were coming, so I'm guessing that's where they're stationed. The agents working for the Department, I mean. That's where I'll go after this, after I kill you, I'll hunt them down."

"You're just a kid," the Warden hisses and Tommy rolls his eyes.

“I’m the Huntsman Spider,” he snaps. “And you picked the wrong people to imprison.”

Tommy doesn’t hesitate. All he knows is that behind the Warden, Phil remains in a cell. All he knows is that if the Warden falls, he can get to Phil. His flock is so close yet so far.

Tommy will not let anything or anyone stop him.

He is the Huntsman Spider.

He is one of twenty-eight.

Two survivors, one winner.

He does not fail. He survives.

Techno leans on Wilbur and Jack is dead and Quackity is dead and the burning erupts into a full-blown forest fire.

Tommy bares his teeth.

The Warden will suffer, just like his family has.

The Warden will not have the mercy of a quick and painless death.

The Warden will bleed and he will die knowing there are consequences to his actions.

He really should’ve arrested Tommy, too.

As much as it goes against all of his training, Tommy ignores it. This isn’t the Huntsman Spider, this is all him.

It isn’t anger, he’s feeling, no. It’s rage. Pure, blinding rage.

He darts forward and starts to cut. One to his thigh, one to his stomach. He cuts at any available skin, digging in, twisting, slashing and swiping.

He draws it out, makes it hurt.

The Warden stumbles and lurches, crying out and Tommy revels in his agony.

He doesn’t stop until the Warden collapses, blood spilling in a puddle around his fallen form. A cut at his leg, a thigh wrap and flip, a cut to his jugular. Tommy leans down, plucks the key card from around his neck.

“Your mistake,” Tommy hisses, “has cost you your life.”

The Warden gurgles behind him but Tommy pays him no attention.

He unlocks the door and cuts the rope holding Phil to the ceiling. He rushes over, letting the man lean on him as he collapses forward.

Tommy unlocks the cuffs around his hands, the collar around his throat and Phil makes a low chirp in his throat. It sounds almost like he's trying to comfort Tommy.

"I'm alive, so are Wil and Techno," Tommy replies, letting out his own version of a soothing chirp.

Phil shudders in his arms, voice dripping relief as he replies, "I couldn't- couldn't feel them."

"I can't find Jack or Quackity," he says and when Phil pulls back, he notices the cut across his eye, a white film over it.

Now that Tommy thinks about it, they all look like Norse Gods.

"You're here," Phil whispers. "You saved me, saved us."

"Always," Tommy replies.

"The boys?" He asks and Tommy rolls his eyes.

"Tubbo and Ranboo are safe--"

His ears start to ring as his knees buckle. A little girl's voice is screaming: a panicked and fearful scream.

He raises his hands to ears and nearly collapses as arms wrap around him, holding him up. His vision fills with black spots and he's pretty sure his nose has started to bleed.

(In his apartment, Sam rolls his eyes at the microwave that demands he sings even time he tries to get it to work. Darien used to have a sense of humour.

Sam Nook chatters in the background, something about which spices will help Ponk recover quicker.

He goes to respond when the microwave suddenly cuts off and Sam Nook staggers on the worktop.

Sam grabs the robot before he can fall and stares down at him. "What's wrong, Sam Nook?"

He chitters something, tiny hands gripping Sam's thumb before his eyes shut and he falls silent and still in his hand. Sam stares at him and his back hits the cabinets as he falls to the ground.

The only way Sam Nook would stop working is if-

If-

Darien.

He swallows.

Tommy followed through on his promise.

Darien is dead.)

“Where is he? Why can I feel him?” The voice of the scream screeches at him and Tommy vaguely realises it’s Pandora.

“What’s happening?” She continues to yell. “Why is it so quiet? Why-?”

“Stop,” he begs. “Stop. The Warden’s dead and I’m absorbing his power, which means I can shut you down. Fucking stop.”

Pandora falls silent. Tommy breathes a sigh of relief.

He can feel the wiring of the building chatter in his mind, voices small and overlapping. He can sense every crackle of electricity, every device trying to gain his attention.

“If you shut me down,” Pandora whispers. “Every cell door will open.”

“And?” He hisses back. “You’ve been torturing these people. Don’t think I didn’t notice the fucking journalists and political opponents here.”

“I was keeping them safe,” she murmurs. “That’s what I do. That’s what Darien told me to do: protect people, keep the criminals away from the vulnerable.”

She sounds confused, and so, so young. Tommy wipes the blood from his nose, his ears as Phil talks to him. He can’t hear him. He can just hear her.

“That’s not-“ he sighs. “Pandora, this is bad, real fucking bad. You’re not helping them, you’re hurting them.”

“Oh,” she whispers. “But Darien...”

She trails off. He leans his head against Phil’s shoulder. The man helps him off of the cell floor.

“You can- you can shut me down then,” she says, voice stronger. “Darien said that admitting to the crimes you’ve committed is a good thing and if I’ve hurt people, then I should accept full responsibility.”

“How?” He asks, swaying on his feet. “I don’t-“

Discovering a new power is always a little disorienting but he pushes through it, imagines Eret or the woman’s voice in his head, telling him to control it.

Closing his eyes, he mentally reaches for the crackle of electricity ringing in his ears, sees it like a bunch of tiny, orange threads interwoven with one another. He look at the thread connecting him to the mass of wires and snaps it.

The silence is deafening as his ability washes over him.

The prison groans beneath his feet as the lights and alarms suddenly stop, everything falling dead.

Then, the prison shifts once again as the cell doors slide open and Tommy can finally hear Phil trying to talk to him, speaking to Wilbur and Techno over his shoulder.

“-if he’s okay because he’s just standing here-“

“Shut the fuck up,” he murmurs, wiping the dried blood from his face and ears. “I can hear you.”

“What happened?” Techno asks, looking more awake.

“Pandora’s been shut down,” he says, then frowns. “Permanently. We need to leave before any of the powered prisoners try and turn on us.”

They all look at him, opening their mouths and he holds up a hand, shaking his head. He feels mildly concussed, which is strange because he’s not hit his head.

Maybe that’s what shutting this ability down does to him.

“Questions when we’re no longer stranded in the middle of the fucking ocean, okay? Good. Great, even. Let’s go.” He pauses, looks at them. “You’re like the Norse Gods.”

Wilbur huffs at him. “What?”

“Loki,” he says, gesturing to Wilbur’s face.

“Odin,” he says, gesturing to Phil’s eye.

“Tyr,” he says, gesturing at Techno’s shaking hand.

Phil hums. “I suppose you’re right.”

Tommy nods, and then leads them out of the obsidian lobby, around the corner only for someone to kick the gun from his hands.

Tommy reacts like a Huntsman.

He jabs his foot down onto the person’s knee, grabbing them to flip them. They’re quick though and Tommy realises that the person he’s fighting is Spifey, as the man rolls into the flip, kicking at his ribs.

“Wait!” Tommy yells in Russian, remembering what Niki told him, acknowledging that the fighting style is extremely familiar. “We’re on the same side, Huntsman.”

Spifey pauses, head tilting. “You don’t want to use me?” He asks in Russian and Tommy shakes his head.

“You can join us for the ride but I’m not going to use you, man. I will kill you, though.”

Spifey smiles at him, rips the shock-collar from around his throat. “Yeah, I get that.”

Tommy nods. “Cool,” he says in English, looking over his shoulder at the others. “Spifey is a Huntsman that was-“

“Sold to the Warden,” Spifey finishes for him and reaches down to offer the gun to Tommy. “I heard you destroyed the Room.”

Tommy shrugs, starts walking. “Department X still stands and the agents have been disappearing.”

“So it’s not over.”

Tommy cuts him a sharp look. “When it comes to them, it never will be. Not unless everyone associated with them is dead.”

Spifey holds up his hands. “Once I’m out of here, I’m running. No way in hell am I involving myself.”

Tommy rolls his eyes, sees a guard and shoots. He then calmly steps over his body. “We tried that,” he murmurs. “Look where that got us.”

They stagger through the corridors and most of the guards and prisoners don’t try to stop Tommy. They back away, hands raised in a surrender, eyes wide.

A few try.

They die quickly.

Once out into the landing pad of the Vault, Tommy spots Alyssa and Callahan waiting for them by the quinjet.

Tommy waves them in, helping Techno up as Wilbur nearly falls on his face trying to get in. Phil soon follows and Spifey slips past them to the cockpit.

Tommy goes to follow when he hears a very familiar voice shout, “you weren’t going to ditch me, were you, Tommy?”

He turns to meet Jack Manifold’s grinning face.

He looks the same as he did when he was arrested but there’s something off about him. His eyes are glowing behind his glasses, and his veins seem to be darker, like the vibrant orange of lava between cracks of rock.

Sapnap looks like that when he loses himself to his abilities.

“I thought you died?” Tommy asks and Jack grins.

“Oh, I did.” He points to his shaved hair. “You just can’t tell because I don’t have hair. No white section for me.”

“How?” Phil asks and Jack’s grin widens.

“Pure fucking spite.”

Wilbur outright laughs and Techno rolls his eyes. Tommy holds out his hand to help him up as the quinjet roars to life.

That’s when the guards appear from the door, holding up rifles. Tommy grabs his gun, doesn’t hesitate to start picking them off but freezes when Jack shifts in front of him.

He tilts his head and the guards freeze. Tommy can feel the hair on the back of his neck rise. The Huntsman immediately focuses his attention to Jack, as if sensing the bigger threat.

This is something dangerous, something powerful.

A leopard spotting a lion, knowing the stronger, bigger cat will win.

Jack tilts his head at the guards and blinding, blue flames curl around the guards, as if the fire sprouted from the concrete ground of the landing pad.

Tommy swallows as the guards are engulfed and the quinjet rolls out from the landing docks.

The minute the guards are nothing but ash and bone, Jack turns around with a grin. He steps up beside Tommy and slides the door shut.

“Since when?” Tommy asks and Jack shrugs.

“I changed.” He looks at Tommy with those glowing eyes. “So have you.”

“What?”

“Your soul. It’s all bright, like a fucking glow stick.”

“You can see souls?” Phil asks, quietly and Jack gives him a pointed stare.

“You can’t?”

“I don’t tend to admit it out loud, mate.”

Tommy, settling beside Spifey, looks down at himself as if he can now magically see his own soul. He can’t.

He guesses being Life has altered him. He’s not exactly human anymore.

So what does that make Jack?

“Jack,” he calls as the quinjet lefts into the air. “I bet your soul looks like a fucking bitch.”

Jack snorts and Phil asks, “you’re a Revenant, aren’t you?”

“A what?” Alyssa breathes, head tilted before he eyes widen. “Oh.”

“Revenants are spirits of vengeance,” Phil explains. “They do die but a need for revenge brings them back. It’s normally to get back at those that killed them but the Warden is dead and Jack hasn’t died again.”

“Again?” Spifey questions before looking at Tommy. “Where to?”

“L’Manberg,” Tommy mutters.

“Once the revenant takes their revenge, they can die peacefully.” Phil stares at Jack. “You should be dead.”

“I’m not finished yet,” Jack replies, leaning back.

“You know who you’re after?”

Jack shrugs. “I have an idea and I don’t think I’m going to be dying for a while.”

Tommy spares them a brief look before turning back to the control panel.

With his direction, Spifey helps him to fly the quinjet back to L’Manberg. The rest of the flight is silent and it seems neither Techno nor Wilbur are in a particularly talkative mood.

They land the ‘jet in the Las Nevadas landing pad, near the fake Eiffel Tower. Spifey is quick to leave the minute they touch down and Tommy doesn’t have the energy to run after him.

Spifey has been through hell. If he wants to disappear, he can disappear. Tommy won’t stop him, not when his family needs him.

“We need to lay low,” Tommy says, helping to shoulder Techno’s weight as he steps down.

“They think I’m dead so my house would be good,” Jack says and Tommy hums.

“Quackity has cars in the lower levels,” Tommy says and Jack is quick to leave.

Alyssa and Callahan both pause in front of Tommy. “Thank you for helping us,” she says. “But I think this is where our paths diverge.”

Tommy nods as he lets Wilbur lean on him. “I understand. If I find Dream, I’ll tell him you’re out.”

Callahan signs his thanks and Alyssa smiles at him, softly. Before they leave, she pauses and says, “check your apartment, Tommy, and remember, you can save them.”

With that, they walk out of Las Nevadas.

Tommy blinks after them as dread sets in. His apartment. Tubbo, Ranboo and Niki.

Minutes later, Jack pulls up in an SUV. Tommy doesn’t follow them in.

“I have to go and check something,” he says, quietly.

“Toms-“ Wilbur mutters but he shakes his head.

“You need a proper sleep and some food,” he says. “I’m good. I just- I have to go and get Niki, Tubbo and Ranboo.”

He looks at Jack and the man nods, starts the car.

Tommy doesn’t walk to his apartment. He sprints there. Slamming through the door, he sprints up the stairs, running as fast as he can until he gets to his apartment door.

He pauses, grabs his silenced gun and slowly opens the door. He calms his heart rate, letting the Huntsman flicker over his features.

There’s no one here.

His apartment is shockingly silent.

No one stands in the open floor plan, no one is in his bathroom. There’s no windows open either.

There is some blood on the kitchen counter, on the floor and there, on his counter top, a single finger.

A pinky finger.

He knows what that means.

That’s a Red Room warning.

Niki wouldn’t have gone down without a fight and Ranboo does have the Huntsman in his mind, he’s also trained with Techno.

Whoever did this is highly skilled and someone Niki trusted.

He swallows and lets the panic rise and build until he crests and then breathes out.

The Huntsman hovers in the background as he changes out of the prison guard uniform and into light combat gear. He grabs his getaway bag, makes sure his boots have his knives in before leaving his apartment.

He can’t drag Phil, Wilbur and Techno into this. Not when they’re fresh out of the Vault. They need time to heal.

Tommy can’t-

A hand grabs him.

He grabs their wrist, twists his body until the person is pressed to the wall, Tommy’s knife under their chin.

“Hello, Theseus.” A warm voice greets in a British accent. “It seems someone got here before I could.”

Chapter End Notes

Love a bit of Prison Break and I wonder who that was at the end ;)

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

This chapter hopefully clears a couple of things up ;)

TW// violence, blood, injury, brainwashing, trigger phrases, past child abuse, non-consensual drug use, kidnapping, death threats/mentioned, brief mention of suicidal ideation, brief mention of dismemberment/body horror/gore, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Quackity doesn't think he's ever been to Russia.

He's heard a lot about it, of course. Sapnap and Tommy both discuss it, in varying degrees of warmth and pain.

Russia will always be their home. It will always be the place they were raised but happy memories are few and far between.

So Quackity sits patiently in the car, staring out at the scenery of Moscow. There is less snow than he would've expected. It's freezing though, the cold biting at his skin, making him shiver.

Even when he's been given a giant coat.

They drive away from Moscow and the snow gets thicker. Quackity doesn't ask where he's going, not when they didn't answer the first few times.

The car parks and Quackity frowns at the factory-like building. He has no idea why he's here but he can hazard a guess.

The Red Room want him. They have since they sent Sapnap to infiltrate Las Nevadas. He just doesn't know why.

The guards with him pull him out of the car and a hood is thrown over his head. He staggers as he walks, the chill of the wind biting at his exposed hands.

He feels the difference when he steps out of the snow and then they're pausing. The ground shifts beneath his feet: an elevator.

They drop and then he's pulled out again.

It's been a crazy week, he thinks, trying to calm the slow-building panic of being underground.

He's been stuck in a holding cell in the Vault for a couple of days. Beef then handed him over to a tall, thin man who introduced himself as Chandler.

He doesn't know how long he's travelled for.

He doesn't know why he's here.

"Jimmy!" Chandler greets and Quackity tilts his head under the black bag. "We've got him."

"Weapon T?" A new voice - Jimmy, Quackity guesses - asks.

"He was in the area but he's being guarded by the Huntsman and Widow." Chandler says. "His tracker kept glitching so if we target him then--"

"I thought Billiam was picking the agents off?" Jimmy asks and they're walking again, Quackity nearly tripping up as he's ushered along. "He's left two behind?"

"The Huntsman is Theseus," Chandler says and the silence is deafening.

Quackity's hands twitch. Tommy. They're talking about Tommy.

"The Widow is also the one that blew up their last building," Chandler continues.

So Niki then, Quackity thinks. At least they're okay for now.

"He's biding his time," Jimmy breathes. "Waiting for when Theseus is busy before he tries to grab him."

"He's going to need more than Sqaishey if the stories about that kid are true."

Jimmy laughs. "Go and ask your friend, Chandler. I'm sure he'd love to tell you about Theseus."

"He tried to bite me!" Chandler replies in a shocked tone and Jimmy laughs harder.

"Yeah, you might have to ask Grey to ask him." There's a pause. They slow to a stop. "Go on. I've got this."

"Whatever you say, boss."

Footsteps leave and Quackity waits.

The bag is removed from his head.

Quackity meets the brown gaze of a man taller than him with an oddly disarming smile. He immediately doesn't trust it.

He's seen Wilbur wear a smile similar to that and as much as he respects Wilbur, that man is terrifying and too cunning for his own good.

"Quackity," the man greets, holding out a hand. "I'm Jimmy."

"Hi," Quackity replies, shaking his hand. They're standing in a kitchen. A bright, white kitchen with shiny countertops and blinding lights. "Why am I in Russia?"

"Well," the man says. "The Red Room want you. You know who they are, right? Yeah? Good. They want you because of some negotiation you shot down- look. I don't care. My business may be associated with the Room but I don't care."

"And?" Quackity asks, tilting his head back.

"And," Jimmy continues with a grin. "I have something you want. You have something I want. Let's make a deal. I just want a phone number and some information. You want- well. I'll show you."

Jimmy turns on his heel and approaches large, double doors. He throws them open, steps through and Quackity-

Quackity should run. No one is watching.

But, god, is he curious.

So he follows, albeit a little slower and nearly has a heart attack at the sight before him.

Karl is curled on the couch, skin deathly pale, and clothes seemingly being bleached white. He doesn't twitch at the sound of them but Quackity can see his chest rising and falling steadily.

He's alive.

Thank god, he's alive.

"He's been growing stronger," Jimmy mentions casually. "I don't have abilities like a large majority of the population but my blood is special. It amplifies abilities. Those who win my games, get exposed to my blood and even those without abilities sometimes end up with them."

Quackity swallows. "That's what you're doing to him?"

Jimmy nods. "The process is draining but he's a fighter."

"You're experimenting on him," Quackity hisses, steps closer and before he can even blink, Jimmy has a gun levelled at Karl's head.

"I can kill him if you'd like," Jimmy says with the same calm smile. "You're a gambling man, right, Quackity? These are the stakes. You tell me what I want to know, or I shoot Karl in the head. You're fiancés, right?"

Quackity's mind starts to race.

He's smart. That's his deal. Quackity has always been the smarter one. His mind rivals Wilbur's.

Quackity is also a gambling man and as much as he loves high stakes, he knows when to back out. This isn't a game he can win.

But he has another card up his sleeve.

He pulls a cocky smirk to his lips. "You won't."

Jimmy pauses. "Excuse me?"

"You're excused," Quackity replies and then gestures to Karl, heart racing. "You won't kill Karl. You've not gone to all of this fucking trouble to make him stronger if you're only going to shoot him. Not when you look at him like he's a fucking prize. I'm calling your bluff."

Cards on the table, all laid bare.

Jimmy meets his eyes and then pulls the gun away. "You got me," he says with a laugh. "However--"

He walks over to where the window shows the snow outside. He taps it and the scenery immediately shifts, glitches, changes.

Fake scene. Quackity is impressed and steps beside Jimmy when he waves him over.

His heart, once again, nearly stops.

Sapnap stands in the middle of a field, blood staining his temple, the knuckles of his hands, his lip.

"You're right," Jimmy says, quietly. "I can't kill Karl but I have no attachment to this Huntsman. Not when he's torching any guard or scientist that gets near him. So, Quackity. Give me what I want or I change the game."

"To what?" Quackity breathes, eyes not leaving Sapnap's still form, position neutral as if waiting.

"Whoever can kill the Huntsman Spider, gets immunity from the rest of my games. There are three hundred and forty left, Quackity. He's good but is he that good?"

Sapnap clearly can't see or hear them and Quackity isn't a fighter. He can't take on Jimmy and win, not when his fiancés will suffer if he loses.

"What do you want to know?"

Jimmy grins. "Please, sit. We have so much to discuss."

Dream blinks the stars from his eyes. For a second, his chest tightens and panic floods his bloodstream before he reins it in, stops it from consuming him.

He was the Huntsman Spider. He still is one.

Swallowing, he darts a glance to see the figure watching the car. He tries to call upon the earth but his head hitting the side of the car makes it hard to focus. Smoke burns Dream's lungs as he turns to Puffy.

Her head is bleeding and she's unconscious. He manoeuvres himself awkwardly to press two fingers to the side of her neck. A steady pulse greets him. He breathes a sigh of relief.

"Sorry," he mutters before slapping her as lightly with as much force to wake her as possible.

She groans and startled eyes meet his.

"You're alive and in the car," he states as clinically as possible. "It flipped and slid, you need to leave through that window--"

"Dream," she whispers, fingers touching the blood at the side of his temple. He gently squeezes her hand.

"I will deal with whoever that is. Go."

Without waiting, he reaches for his gun that's by his feet and then crawls from the window. His ears ring and his vision swims but he has to look after Puffy.

He doesn't hesitate to shoot.

The figure raises an arm to cover their neck and face and the bullets bounce right off. Something in Dream's mind pauses at that.

He remembers someone wearing a combat suit like that, with the arms reinforced.

But the thoughts are scrambled as the person turns from him, as if he's not important, even when Dream was the one shooting at them.

Dream isn't the primary target.

Puffy is.

The hit is for Puffy specifically and the car was flipped to hopefully put him out of commission.

His green eyes darken as the Huntsman takes over.

He lunges, throwing his gun - bullets clearly can't pierce the figure's body armour - away. The figure dodges his swing, snapping their head to focus on Dream.

Good. That's less attention on Puffy.

To get to her, they're going to have to kill him first.

And he's not going down without a fight.

Dream kicks and the figure blocks it, hand reaching for something. Dream grabs at their arm and the figure moves with an oddly familiar speed, twisting and flipping Dream over their shoulder.

Before he can blink, there's a cold sensation encasing his wrist.

Dream darts a glance to his wrist and sees a power dampener bracelet locked there. The design is shockingly familiar, with the hourglass symbol facing him on the clasp.

Red Room.

The old Red Room symbol of Soviet times when the only agents were Black Widows.

Dream looks back at the figure, mask covering their jaw, goggles covering their eyes, hood hiding their head.

Dream snaps into action.

He kicks at their legs and jerks his arm away before flipping up. The person is quick to follow but Dream is fighting for more than survival now, more than Puffy's survival. He's fighting because he refuses to give into the Room.

Not again. Never again.

Dream switches tactics as he kicks and punches. The figure pulls out a knife - they're not trying to kill him, not yet, not when they're after the primary target, he just has to annoy them enough to make them angry.

A dodge there, a kick to the shins. The figure slices at his arm but Dream is close enough to punch the figure right in the face.

The glass of one of the goggles cracks and the figure reels back.

It's not a Widow.

They would've flipped Dream by now.

Widows aren't as messy. They're quicker, more efficient.

So a Huntsman.

Dream is taller than most of the agents but the one before him is smaller, thinner.

They move like a Widow, twisting around him, trying to knock him down to focus on Puffy. But there is a force behind their hits that is all Huntsman.

The figure grabs him and Dream flips as the figure tries to break his arm. He punches low, hitting for the kidneys and the figure falls back, uppercutting Dream, sharply.

Another knife appears. The figure flips it in their hand. Dream punches, getting deflected each time while trying to slap the knife from their grasp.

The figure slashes, nearly cutting Dream's chest before flipping the blade into the air. They catch it after punching Dream's cheek. Dream catches their fist and kicks the blade from their hand before spinning, slamming a booted foot straight into the figure's chest.

The figure stumbles, then lunges forward, blocking Dream's punch and smashing their own fist into his face. He barely blocks it before a leg smacks into his side.

Dream catches it, pulls the figure forward and rips at the hood, fingers hooking on a clasp at the back of their head to pull the goggles off.

He gets a knee in his chest for his luck but he can finally see brown, fluffy hair and brown eyes.

But he knows the shape of that brow, the feel of that hair beneath his hands, even with the mask covering the bottom half of his face.

"George?" Dream asks, breathless all of a sudden.

The pain of the punches seems to hit as he stumbles in place, eyes widening at the sight of George before him.

He's alive.

But those aren't the dark eyes he's used to seeing.

There is no recognition in them. No spark when he sees Dream. No warmth.

George tilts his head, clearly confused with the now neutral position Dream is in. He's not fighting back anymore, can't bring himself to.

This is George. He doesn't fight to kill his friends, his brothers, the man he loves. Not now. Never again.

Just like how Sapnap refuses to even spar with Tommy in case he hurts him.

Dream has drawn a line in the sand.

One he will not cross.

Not again. Never again.

He's not surprised to see George reach for another weapon, this time a gun in his thigh holster.

As the gun is raised, Dream finally sees the red star painted on the side of the gun.

Sky. The original Huntsman Spider. The Winter Soldier.

George is wearing his combat gear, fitted to him.

Dream meets those cold eyes and doesn't flinch at the gun staring at him. George won't miss, he never misses. It will be quick and he will miss Tommy and, god, Sapnap, and he doesn't know what's happening in L'Manberg and he prays his family is safe, that Puffy-

A figure appears in a blur.

They drop from the sky, large wings flattened and for a second, for a glorious, heart wrenching moment, Dream thinks it's Tommy.

But the wings have blue secondary and primary feathers. The covets are yellow.

The figure slams into George, and they both tumble as the figure staggers on the landing, while George rolls.

He's up in seconds though and Dream has a second to stare at Grian in shock before he hears a click and watches a disc fly past him on the ground.

George, the minute he spots the disc, starts to move and Dream makes the reckless decision to follow.

It's Grian that knocks him to the ground a second before the car on the curb explodes, flipping up in a cloud of smoke and sparks.

When Dream rises to his feet, he meets Puffy's panicked gaze. She leans heavily on another car, hands gripping the strange rifle George had used to flip their car.

When Dream turns around, George is nowhere to be seen.

There are more sirens and Grian is explaining that he tried calling them and they can trust him but Dream can't hear him, can't focus. George has cold eyes and doesn't recognise him and was willing to kill him.

Dream swallows.

What the hell happened while he's been gone?

Ranboo doesn't intend to leave the apartment. Really, he would rather stay and ignore the fact that his family is gone and that Tommy is going to hopefully try and get them back.

He just eats Niki's food and laughs at Tubbo and tries to just forget about everyone and everything. It's simpler like that, easier.

Until he remembers Enderchest, his beautiful, little cat. He needs to make sure he's filled up the bowl of water.

That's the whole reason he's out here, teleporting to their house.

Enderchest is fine, having used the cat flap to go out and investigate and the automated cat food dispenser is in order.

He's hoping to be quick, as he itches behind the cat's ears.

Until the phone rings.

Ranboo knows he shouldn't pick up. He does. But a part of him wonders if maybe this is important.

So he grabs the phone from the receiver - Phil had made them get a landline - and accepts the call. He places it near his ear and says, "hello?"

"Ranboo?" Quackity mutters, voice somewhat dull.

"Yes?"

There's a shuffling sound and then another voice says a long string of numbers. He blinks, mind burning as everything flickers at the edges of his vision.

It reminds him of that time in the snow, when he saw Eret again.

Because Ranboo had forgotten all about the Room until he was faced with the man of his past. He remembers the way the words had him pausing, everything falling blank as memories he'd thought were lost floated within reach.

This isn't Eret, though.

"Asset?" The person says and part of him lights up, remembers a warm smile from a man called the Beast.

He finds himself standing straight. He replies in Russian, the language so familiar yet so distant, "ready to comply."

Seconds later, after his instructions have been given, he teleports back to the apartment. He walks into Tommy's kitchen and approaches Niki. She smiles when she sees him.

"We're having--"

He doesn't wait to find out what she's planning for dinner.

He kicks at her ankles, slamming her head into the kitchen counter. She crumbles, head hitting the apartment floor. He waits, watches as she blinks unsteadily and leans over her.

Grabbing the sides of her skull, he slams her head against the floor and watches the way she falls limp.

He stands, makes his way over to Tommy's bed. Under it, all of his many weapons are stored but Ranboo doesn't need a weapon.

He grabs a smoke grenade and waits.

Tubbo emerges from the bathroom five minutes later, towelling his hair.

Ranboo pulls the pin and throws it in front of Tubbo, using his shirt to block some of the smoke. But he doesn't fear that he'll inhale too much.

Tubbo is, after all, a bee.

Smoke makes bees very sleepy and within three seconds, Tubbo is collapsing on the ground, eyes rolling back into his skull.

Ranboo walks over to him, grabbing one of the knives Tommy keeps in his knife block. He grabs Tubbo's left hand and cuts.

He takes the pinky finger and leaves it on the counter before placing the kitchen knife back in the block.

Those weren't his instructions but he wasn't told not to warn Tommy about what's happening.

That's the thing about triggers: if they've been dormant for a long time, they're open to interpretation.

He turns back to Tubbo.

Ranboo grabs him and locks a hand around Niki's ankle and then teleports back home.

"Our progress?" Hannah asks, dancing over to stand at his side.

Billiam nods to the papers on his desk. "Lady's latest reports."

Hannah hums. "The agents?"

"Corpse has his political connections back, full bill of health despite the frying it took to get him to release Squishey," he starts. "Squid is with Melina at the Beast labs. Toast is trying to find out where the children are. George has been deployed to assist Schlatt and wrangle Dream. Dan has been--"

Hannah huffs, cutting him off. "The Helicarriers are still going up?"

Billiam nods. “They’ll be optimal in about a week, fully weaponised with Doc’s algorithm. Xisuma is watching Schlatt.”

“You think he can resist...” She trails off, pointing to her head and Billiam shrugs.

“It’s gone... silent. Quiet.”

There is no voice in his head telling him how to achieve his plans. There hasn’t been for a few days now. If Hannah’s look is anything to go by, she also hasn’t heard it either.

“It is keeping us alive while turning some of the others and dealing with the imprisonment of that God,” she says, quietly, lowly. “Maybe it’s exhausted itself.”

Billiam nods, worried. In his mind, he’s started calling it the Egg. He doesn’t know why, it just fits, like the age old question of what came first in history: the chicken or the egg.

Billiam knows whatever is speaking to them, controlling them, is older than time itself. It’s before gods and abilities, before the earth was earth.

“We must continue our plans for when it returns,” he says and she nods.

“Bad is heading to D.C. to help with the takeover. The Beast isn’t making a problem out of himself so we should wait until he does before we involve ourselves.”

“When can we return?” He asks, remembering looking out of his window and seeing clouds. “I miss my office.”

“Theseus will come home soon,” Hannah says, confidently. “We must be waiting for him.”

Chapter End Notes

First rule of consuming media: if you don’t see a body, they’re not dead

Hello again, Corpse <3

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Some reveals ;)

TW// mention of forced sterilisation, brief mention of rape themes, non-consensual drugging, kidnapping themes, violence, past abuse, past brainwashing, weaponry, mention of human trafficking, threats of child death, injury, blood, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“What?” Tommy hisses, finally meeting blue eyes. “What the fuck does that mean?”

“Whoever has them, the Room didn’t order it,” the man says, calmly, not fazed by the knife at his throat.

“Why would someone-“

“Theseus.” The man interrupts. “Can we do this somewhere else?”

“That’s not my fucking name, it’s Tommy. Now give me one good fucking reason why I shouldn’t slit your throat?” Tommy hisses, baring his teeth to the man.

“Because then I can’t tell you where your friends are, can I?” The man says, head tilting.

“That finger means Russian, you and I both know that. And I can’t tell you what’s happening with the Room if you kill me.”

“Why would you just willingly tell me that?” Tommy asks, suspicion lining his words.

The man smiles at him. “I have my reasons. Which you’ll find out. If you follow me.”

“Back to Russia?” Tommy asks, digging the blade in but the man rolls his eyes.

“No.” He says, lightly. “To England.”

“Someone was approaching the apartment, sir,” someone familiar says in Russian. “That’s why she’s here, too.”

“Good job, kid.” Someone replies. “We can use her.”

Niki's head aches as she comes to her senses. She doesn't twitch, refuses to give away the fact she's awake.

She simply pays attention to what's around her.

The ground is hard beneath her body and the chill reminds her of Russia. It smells of wood and bleach and she can faintly hear the trickle of water.

She remembers Ranboo approaching her, remembers her head smashing into the counter before he grabbed her head and smashed it into the floor.

So he's been triggered. Possibly. Maybe.

Footsteps leave and more sound. A door shuts, locks.

"Hello, Nikita," someone says and she keeps still, keeps her breathing even. "I know you're awake."

She cracks one eye open and is met with Squid's smiling face. His hair is longer but his eyes are still teal, still warm. She remembers when he used to train her, when her powers manifested.

Back before all of the original agents left.

Back before she blew that base up.

"It's Niki," she breathes, sits up as her vision swims.

"Niki, then." He replies, easily. "The kid did a number on you, huh? Never thought you'd be one to go down so easily."

Niki frowns at him. "I'm not a Widow anymore."

He rolls his eyes. "And I can't turn into a massive kraken."

Niki sighs, looking around where she is. It looks like a lobby, with a large tank of water at the back of room, and a desk in the corner. On a wall, a few screens sit, depicting entrances and exits.

There's a reinforced door, blocking her way out.

"I like your room," she says. "Where's Ranboo and Tubbo?"

"The kids? Jimmy took them. The bee was still unconscious." Squid pauses and then adds, "his pinky finger was missing."

Niki's breath catches at that.

Ranboo must've-

She rises to her feet, swallowing. He was probably leaving the message for Tommy, knowing he'd come to Russia.

"I was expecting the other kid to be here," Squid admits. "Theseus. They keep talking about him."

"What? Why?" Niki blinks at him.

Squid laughs at her. "He took down the Room and killed the unkillable, he killed the woman. Why else do you think they left you all alone for so long? No one wants to risk him getting a power up through us."

And just like that, the pieces to the puzzle started clicking into place.

"You picked us off when we started to leave L'Manberg," she whispers. "You were waiting for when he wasn't watching."

He nods. "The kid's instructions were to wait until Theseus wasn't there. Seems Jimmy has impeccable timing."

Tommy can handle himself. Niki knows that. She knows he's more than capable but the thought of him being vulnerable and alone makes her heart hurt.

He may be capable but he's just a boy.

"They want me to train him," Squid says, calmly, when she doesn't answer him. Niki freezes. Not Ranboo, not when he's free of their life.

"You touch him, either of them, I'll kill you."

"I don't know, Niki." Squid says, tilting his head, eyes warm but smile wolffish. "You're not the Nikita I know. You're... soft."

Niki raises her eyebrows. "That's not going to work. I'm not going to rise to the bait."

"No?" He asks, grabs her arm and everything in her mind quietens. The Widow wakes up. "You really have changed--"

She flips him before he can finish that sentence.

A kick to his shins, a twist to her body and a pull and he's tumbling over her shoulder. Before he can even move, she has a boot on his neck.

"No," she says and then releases him.

He immediately flips to his feet, chuckling under his breath.

"Not a Widow anymore, huh?" He breathes and she rolls her eyes at him. "Look. If I don't train him, someone else will."

“Who else is here, then?” She asks and Squid’s eyebrows slowly raise as he starts to stalk back to his tank.

“From what I’ve heard, Ranboo’s an investment.” Squid hops up to sit at the edge of the glass. “Born to the Room but born half-dead. The Beast only helped to save him with his blood because the deal was Ranboo would work for him here.”

“Like Sean,” Niki whispers and Squid nods, fingers making ripples in the water of his tank.

“He hates it here,” he mutters, offhandedly. “Tried to take my head off when he saw me.”

“We were free,” Niki says when Squid fits her a confused stare. “All of us.”

He scoffs. “Not all of us. We were still there, under Billiam’s orders.”

“Squid-“

He waves her off. “What I’m trying to say is: if I don’t train him, he’ll be sent home.”

She swallows. “The Room is gone.”

Squid laughs. “The Room will never be gone. In a couple of hours, Jimmy will be back to ask if I can train him. He’s probably already called Billiam.”

With that, Squid tips back into the water.

Tommy finds out on the plane that the man’s name is Dan and he’s an original Huntsman. He has a very interesting ability to clone himself which means he’s less affected by the chair’s wiping and the psychological conditioning.

Only one form of him experiences it and the more he duplicates, the lesser the effects.

He doesn’t explain why they’re going to England, doesn’t explain how he knows Tommy. He just sits next to him and tells him that he remembers a journey like this, nearly two decades ago.

“It’s blurry,” he says, looking out of the window, hand running through his hair, fiddling with his glasses. “But I remember bits and pieces of it.”

“This doesn’t help, man,” Tommy says but Dan doesn’t answer any of his questions.

Not until they arrive in England and Dan picks up a rental car to drive them to Nottinghamshire.

Nestled near the trees, they pull up to a modern house. Brick walls and big windows, a single garage. Despite its clean exterior, there is no warmth about the house.

It’s quiet.

No one is home.

“C’mon,” Dan says, stepping from the car and toward the front door. He doesn’t wait for Tommy. He simply grabs his keys and walks in.

Tommy hastily follows and is met with white walls and a large living room. There’s a conservatory that shows a tidy garden. Over the fence, he can spot the trees of Sherwood Forest.

“I don’t understand,” Tommy breathes and Dan runs a hand through his hair before looking at Tommy with something akin to agony in his eyes.

“Welcome to your childhood home.”

Karl wakes with a gasp.

Everything in his body aches as he flails. He ends up on his hands and knees on the wooden floor below.

Looking around, he doesn’t remember where he is. He doesn’t remember how he ended up here.

He stumbles to his feet, nearly falls as his body refuses to work. His vision is blurred and he has the urge to vomit. He chokes it down as he looks around the room he’s in.

A living room with a window showing snow outside.

He tilts his head and there’s a split second when he sees the door open.

He turns but the door remains closed.

A second later, it swings open.

He’s met with a smiling face and the name slips out before he can think. “Jimmy?”

The man’s smile widens. “You’re up! How are you feeling?”

“Like dog water,” he replies and Jimmy huffs a laugh.

His vision goes back to black and white and he sees-

A pen flying through the air-

Jimmy laughing as he catches Karl when his legs give out-

The snow stops falling-

Karl’s vision returns to colour and he snaps a hand out as the pen sails through the air.

Jimmy huffs a laugh. "Can you see them? You mutter about timelines in your sleep."

Karl looks at the pen in his hands. "What's- what's happening to me?"

"You're becoming more powerful," Jimmy says. "Come on. I have something to test you with."

Karl shuffles after Jimmy, who slows to keep up with Karl. He's shaky on his legs, mind aching along with his body.

They pass from what appears to be the main house, down an elevator. There's winding corridors and damp and Karl shivers.

It's freezing.

It's Russia, his mind whispers and then shows him the weather forecast. In two hours, the snow looks to stop.

Two men pause at the sight of him. "Karl!" The shorter one says, reaching over to pull him into an embrace.

"It's good to see you up," the taller one says with a smile.

Chris and Chandler.

"Hi," he replies. "What's- why am I here?"

"Jimmy wants to test you," Chandler says and knocks on a reinforced door.

It swings open and Chris slips a gun into Karl's hands.

He nearly drops it as he's pushed past the door's threshold.

It's a long corridor, filled with large doors and armed guards standing outside of them.

They walk down until they're at the end of the corridor and take a sharp right. The door swings open and a boy is sitting there, cradling a bandaged hand.

He has wings on his back and two antennae that are pressed to his skull. A fringe covers his eyes when he lifts his head but Karl can see the tear stains on his cheeks.

There's another boy, in the corner, lying on a mattress, a blanket thrown over him. His eyes, blinking openly slowly as if he's been drugged, are glowing a bright purple.

Tubbo and Ranboo, his mind whispers. Phil's adoptive children.

"Karl?" Tubbo breathes but Jimmy steps closer and the effect is immediate. Tubbo freezes, tense with fear.

Images start flashing through Karl's skull-

Jimmy pulling the trigger-

Karl pulling the trigger-

Ranboo pulling the trigger-

And there, the one future with Tubbo not being shot in the skull-

“So,” Jimmy says, levelling his gun and pressing the muzzle against Tubbo’s temple. The boy makes a terrified whimper, eyes squeezed closed. “Who’s pulling the trigger, Karl?”

He swallows, meets his brown eyes with his own golden ones. “No one is because he has valuable information.”

“He does?” Chandler asks and Chris blinks between them.

“He’s a kid, though.”

“So is the Red Room recruit in the corner,” Jimmy replies with an eye roll and then looks to Karl. “What information?”

“I can see him telling you numbers and letters.” He says, calmly. “He has fragmented nuclear codes.”

There’s a heavy pause.

Then, “seriously?” Chandler points at Tubbo. “Bee boy has nuclear codes?”

“They’re not completed,” Karl says because part of him is screaming that letting them access nuclear weaponry wouldn’t be good at all. “So you may need some time to work on them.”

Jimmy tilts his head, as if he can sense the lie, but the gun drops from Tubbo’s temple. “Can’t you see which ones work?”

Karl shakes his head. “No?”

Jimmy’s contemplative look turns to a frown. “Oh. Maybe we need to move onto phase two.”

“Boss,” Chandler says, stepping closer, clapping Karl on the shoulder. Chris takes the gun from Karl’s hands. “Hasn’t he had too much already? I mean, the kid’s still tired from his shot and Billiam’s sending his agents-“

“You remember him, don’t you?” Jimmy says to Karl, ignoring Chandler completely. “That’s a problem. That’s a pretty big problem, actually.”

“I never said-“ Karl tries to defend himself but Jimmy waves his hand as if to hush him.

“Phase two.” Jimmy looks at Karl. “To remake we first need to break.”

Before Karl can even blink, an arm is wrapping around his throat. He struggles and Tubbo starts to shout and images start to flash before his eyes of hundreds of different paths.

None of it helps as everything snaps to black.

Tommy's world grinds to a halt.

"What?" He breathes.

Dan keeps his eyes on the trees as he explains, "the Room needed better recruits. Hunting through orphanages and trafficking rings only does so much and the kids were never guaranteed to survive. They needed younger children, with minds that were malleable, that could be trained from birth."

"But you said--"

"My generation weren't sterilised," Dan continues, ignoring Tommy. "At least, most of us weren't. Me, Jordan, a few of the Widows, a handful of the other Huntsman. Our powers could be... evolved, made better. We were paired up."

Tommy scrunches up his face. "Uh, can we not--"

"When you were born, the woman was there. She was the second person to hold you." Dan says, finally sending him a brief glance. "We called you Theseus because we hoped if anyone could fight their way out of the spider's web, out of the labyrinth, it would be you."

Tommy loses all the colour in his face. "You--" He hisses, the word lodged in his throat. "You're--"

"I don't remember the details," Dan continues, looking away. "I just remember she - your mother - stayed behind. I got you out, brought you here, gave you to people I trusted with my life. I then took a set of videos depicting the Room's training to S.H.I.E.L.D.. I thought you were safe and you were. For a little while."

But they both now how this story ends, even with the brief knowledge Tommy is getting.

He's a Huntsman Spider.

Twenty-eight to one.

Twenty-eight to two survivors and one Huntsman Spider.

"They wiped me of her, of the Widow, of your mother. She'd died in the distraction needed to sneak you from the facility." Dan whispers. "So only I had the knowledge of where you were and I didn't break. Not through anything they could do to me. Not when it was your life. They trained us better than breaking but they found you anyway."

"How?" Tommy asks, quietly.

"I don't know," he says with a shrug. "But I have my suspicions about Lady."

“Lady?” Tommy frowns. “Who the fuck is Lady?”

“Lizzie,” Dan replies. “One of us. Lady is just a nickname. She can control shadows.”

“And why would she fucking give me up?”

Dan pauses and then sighs. “You don’t know about the boy I was after, do you? The one in your apartment, the recruit?”

“What about Ranboo?” Tommy spits.

“Lizzie wasn’t sterilised either. She had two children.” Dan meets Tommy’s eyes. “One was a girl, older than you. She survived the training. So Lizzie had another child, a boy this time. He was the same age as you.”

Tommy thinks he’s going to be sick.

Because Ranboo was in his class.

And Makim mentioned to Niki that she had a younger brother.

“Ranboo and Niki,” Tommy whispers and Dan shrugs.

“Last I heard, it was Lethe and Nikita.” He smiles at Tommy. “Then again, you’re not Theseus anymore, are you?”

Tommy swallows. “They’re siblings?”

“If you don’t know that,” Dan says, “I’m guessing you have no idea about the other boy, do you?”

Tommy steps forward. “What the fuck do you mean? Tubbo wasn’t- he wasn’t there.”

“Jordan - you probably know him as Sparklez - had a boy but not with a Widow.” Dan laughs. “Fell in love with a target. That’s the only reason they didn’t get involved. They went to find him, saw that he was this tiny, little bee and decided to think about it. Jordan killed them. Every single agent sent to search. So they stopped looking but he was wiped anyway.”

“But you-“

“Remember?” Dan finishes with a shrug. “They sent me to grab them what with you gone and the memories just... came flooding back.”

Tommy swallows. “Is that why you’re telling me this and not trying to bring me in? Because I’m your-“

Tommy can’t bring himself to say son. It feels wrong on his tongue, leaves a sour taste in his mouth.

Because he had freedom.

He was able to be a child, a boy, with a promisingly bright future.

And it was stolen from him all the same.

Dan nods. "Yes. I don't doubt they'll send more than me, even with how afraid they are of you, but they're probably expecting you in Russia." He pauses, takes a deep breath. "That's not all."

"Oh?" Tommy asks, running a hand over his face. "What fucking now?"

"You're starting to get them back. aren't you? The abilities? It will kill you, you know. Having that much power in your body. You have to stop using them, that's why they wiped you of them." He looks at Tommy as if looking into his soul. "You forget them, don't you? That's your mind trying to save your life. If you don't use them, you don't overwhelm yourself."

Tommy blinks, the truth of those statements making his shoulder hike up to his ears defensively. "How do you know?"

"Your mother could replicate powers after seeing them. After five, she'd be so weak. She could also block certain abilities from affecting her."

Tommy frowns. "I don't replicate them, I take them."

"My power is duplication and hers is a form of power absorption." He says. "I guess our abilities merged to create you."

"Fucking- ew. Stop. Thanks." His frown deepens. "They've never made me weak before."

Then again, he is Life. His body is perhaps more stable to hold them all.

But then he thinks about the way the Room would make sure he only had certain abilities. They were trying to limit the fallout of an overwhelmed body.

"Oh," he mutters. "It's a good thing I hardly use them."

Use them or lose them. The motto that worked with all of his stolen abilities apart from his wings and the way no mental power seems to affect him.

Then Life happened and he could hear the chatter of animals, can now hear the flow of electricity in the walls, could probably summon his family if he wanted to.

The thought makes him want to sleep and everything starts to make sense.

Back when he was a young recruit, no one thought he would survive. Maybe the Room thought he would manifest like his parents and when he didn't, so they lost hope.

Up until the missions, up until the boy with the wings.

Then, they realised they'd hit the jackpot.

Tommy was always going to be the most dangerous person in the room when all he had to do was kill his opponent to gain their ability.

They were able to create a child assassin with a way to become more and more powerful with each kill.

“I was always going to be hunted,” he whispers. “They were never going to let me be free.”

Dan looks like he wants to reach out for him. “You can be,” Dan says, as they stand in the remnants of Tommy’s childhood house. “You can go anywhere you want.”

Now it’s but a shell.

Much like Tommy.

“Just not home.” Tommy replies, because he doesn’t think he’s ever had one and this certainly isn’t his. He turns away. Away from the house filled with forgotten memories, away from the what-could-have been, away from the place of normality.

He’s barely made it out of the front door when the Huntsman lights up.

Tommy straightens, head raising as a lone car turns the corner. It’s a black car, tinted windows and Tommy’s blood runs cold.

He stumbles back into the house and Dan takes one look out of the window before handing him his gun and phone.

“Go,” he commands. “I’ll hold them off.”

“Where to?” Tommy spits as he beelines for the back door.

“Russia.” Dan rolls his eyes. “Don’t you have friends to save?”

Tommy takes a moment to look his - he swallows - dad in the eye and smiles before turning around and breaking into a sprint. He hops the fence and is met with open forest.

He dials a familiar number as he runs.

“Hey,” he shouts. “I need-“

Gunshots erupt behind him and the Huntsman takes over.

Kristin doesn’t know how much time has passed.

She can feel her power start to dwindle: flames becoming mere embers.

It will soon reduce her to ash if it is able to grab Tommy.

With Life running through it, she will not be able to hold it off.

She ignores the thought of Tommy failing - he's a fighter, he will survive - and thinks of her husband, her children. She will fight, she will keep pushing it away for them.

She will only fall if Tommy does.

And if Tommy falls, there will be no earth to fight for anyway.

Chapter End Notes

Benchtrio are tied to one another <3

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Hmmm, we're kicking off with a lot of plot today :)

TW// violence, injury, blood, mention of forced suicide, lots of death, mention of aftermath of torture, past brainwashing, past child abuse, forced imprisonment, mention of terrorism, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy doesn't return.

Phil only allows himself to panic in the morning, when Techno and Wilbur have both had a few hours of sleep.

(Reapers don't really need to sleep. Their souls are considered dead but sleeping is one habit none of them have been able to kick. It's soothing, a place of silence and stillness.

Last night, Phil simply wanted his boys to be somewhere safe and be able to rest.

It took an hour before the nightmares began.)

Jack takes one look at them, standing around his kitchen counter and spins the laptop to face him. "CCTV outside Tommy's apartment." He says, sipping his tea.

Phil watches the boy leave with a man in nondescript clothing and enter a car.

"Is he being kidnapped?" Wilbur asks, voice small. They've not spoken about Fundy. Phil won't push the topic with Wilbur looking so fragile.

"He took down the strongest prison by himself," Techno replies, just as quietly. It unnerves Phil to no end. "I don't think it's physically possible to kidnap him."

"Unless he was triggered," Jack replies, placing the cup on the counter, crossing his arms over his chest. "You saw the way they all changed back in Russia."

Phil runs a hand over his face and then winces as his fingers brush his damaged eye. His feathers are starting to grow back in after the clipping: it has been a little over a week and his reaper blood speeds up injuries but he can't fly. He can glide, so long as there's a strong enough air current but not fly.

The thought of being away from the sky makes his feathers puff up angrily.

“Shit,” he whispers.

“That’s not even your worse problem,” Jack says. “When I saw this, I went to investigate. There’s blood in the apartment, along with a pinky finger. There’s no sign of Tubbo, Ranboo or Niki.”

“Fuck.” Phil replies.

Jack snorts. “Worse yet: your competition has moved in.”

“What?” Wilbur asks and Jack types something on his laptop before gesturing to the screen, depicting a list of article titles.

All mentioning the arrival of a new gang, what with the Syndicate being seemingly inactive. Pogtopia.

“Bastards,” Wilbur hisses and Techno’s red eyes glare menacingly at the screen.

“Yep,” Jack says, faux cheerily. “Also-“

He types something else, points to the screen as a video starts up. It’s from a phone, considering the bad angles but the footage is clear as day.

A car flips. A figure slides out of the way. Dream crawls out of the passenger as Puffy pulls herself from the driver’s side. There’s a fight - watching like this, Phil remembers seeing the way Tommy fought so effortlessly in the corridors of the prison - and then Dream freezes as the figure’s hood and goggles are removed.

George.

Someone drops from the sky and Phil’s heart thunders at the sight of Grian, his Grian, the man with the wings who was spying on them, who Phil nearly killed until he chirped with such panic and fear Phil’s instincts took over.

Then there’s an explosion and the footage cuts out.

“D.C., a couple of days ago.” Jack informs them. “Despite all of this fuckery, you want to guess the one place that doesn’t have any news?”

“Russia,” they all breathe and Jack laughs.

Techno and Wilbur both look to Phil and with their expressions ones of confusion and concern, he’s reminded of how he found them: boys, being hunted for being dangerous.

Boys he saved.

“What’s the plan?” Techno asks and Phil cracks his neck.

“First, I’m taking back my fucking home,” he states, voice as cold as the Scandinavian wind. “Then, well, depending on the information given, I might be committing some light terrorism, mate.”

“What happened?” Xisuma asks the minute Dream stalks into the room, blood on his face, on his clothes.

He’s not bothering to hide the Huntsman in his expression, his walk. He’s more than just angry, he’s enraged.

George isn’t George anymore.

He’s theirs.

Their Huntsman Spider, their Winter Soldier.

Dream is long past playing the puppet.

And if that means cutting the man holding the strings, he’s more than willing to follow through on his threats.

“Someone tried to kill me,” he says, calmly, coldly and Xisuma flinches back when their eyes meet. Grian is trialling behind, wings curled tight on his back. He’d been making idle chat as Dream remained quiet. He’s silent now and that-

Well, it makes Dream angrier.

This man saved his life. He willingly dove into a Huntsman holding a gun. Even if Grian doesn’t know who they are - he does now, Dream explained some of it to him - it’s not like Dream and George were trying to act human.

When it comes to fighting, when it comes to what they were taught and how they were trained, there is no such thing as humanity.

Just the inner spider.

Just the weapon.

So how dare someone make Grian, kind and warm and bright Grian, fold in on himself.

“Someone tried to kill me,” Dream repeats as he walks, forcing himself to keep the Russian out of his accent. “And now I’m going to repay the favour.”

Xisuma blanches. “I- what? Wait-“

Dream stalks past him, taking note of the agents with their hands on their weapons and the ones watching him curiously.

Dream stalks to the elevator, stepping in once the doors open. Grian slides behind him and the Huntsman twitches, hating the fact he's allowing his back to be exposed.

But Grian saved his life.

He owes him this sliver of trust.

Xisuma tries to follow but something in Dream's eyes makes the man pause. "Don't make me hit you," Dream says, quietly and Xisuma takes a step back.

The doors close.

Dream presses the Hermits floor.

"I thought-" Grian asks and Dream shakes his head.

"I'm not involving you," Dream says. "Not with this. They will kill you and I can't watch you and my family."

"So I'm just supposed to pretend I didn't nearly watch an assassination?" Grian hisses and Dream's lips twitch.

He tilts his head to meet his eyes. "No. You find out who's S.H.I.E.L.D. and who's from the Department."

Grian relaxes slightly. "Any theories?"

"Xisuma," Dream immediately says. "False. Somethings up with Doc because his computer may be clean but his background check couldn't find him for a few years-"

"You ran background checks? And looked into our computers?"

Dream rolls his eyes, focusing back on the doors. "Of course I did. No one gets close to my mom without me knowing at least some blackmail on them."

Grian makes a wounded noise and then asks, "how can you tell they're with the Department?"

Dream had only briefly mentioned his past to Grian, just the important details. He was raised to be a killer by an organisation in Russia. They've currently infiltrated S.H.I.E.L.D. and probably the government.

"They're too squeaky clean," Dream replies. "Normal people do look at weird things. People hiding things wipe everything that could be considered suspicious. It's also in the way they act. If they close off at certain questions."

Grian hums. "That would include Scar and Mumbo, too."

Dream notes the names in his mind. The elevator slows to a stop.

“Good luck,” he breathes, and Grian nods as the doors open.

He steps out and the doors close. Dream hits the button for the top floor. He doesn't have any guns on him thanks to George but he does have a few knives in his boots, one up his sleeve.

Dream's a Huntsman, after all. He's never needed a gun to kill someone.

He just needs himself.

He steps out of the elevator and walks past the large couches and elegant furniture. He keeps walking until he finds his uncle behind his desk, red eyes gleaming, horns curled tight around his ears.

“Dream,” he greets, staring at the blood in a pointed fashion. “How are you today? How's the no-killing rule going?”

Dream merely blinks at him. “You tried to have her killed.”

Schlatt scoffs. “That depends on if I succeeded.”

It takes everything in Dream's training not to clench his fists. “If you killed her, I would kill you.”

“That's going to go down well.” Schlatt says, leaning back. “Russian assassin kills the next in-line for president.”

Dream tilts his head at that. “You really think you're going to win?” He asks.

“Obviously,” he replies. “Check my numbers. They love me.”

“They're not going to love you when those plans for the Helicarriers gets leaked,” Dream says. “People aren't too fond of genocide these days.”

Schlatt rolls his eyes. “Anything you say, I can just refute. You're a Russian, Dream, even if we share blood. No one will believe your word over mine.”

Dream pauses, nearly laughs. This man has no idea what he's messing with.

“Maybe you're right,” Dream says. “But I don't care what people think of me. Their opinions mean nothing. What matters is you sent a Huntsman after my mother because of your ego.”

“Not just any Huntsman,” Schlatt breathes and Dream-

Dream realises George was sent specifically for him.

Because Dream would never hurt George. Not again. Never again.

He reels in his anger, in his pain and breathes as calmly as possible.

“The Department only ever has Assets and enemies,” Dream says, turning away. “If I were you, I'd be very careful about which side you're on.”

Dream turns, walks back into the elevator. He's not stopped as the doors close.

The Department will kill without mercy. They will kill without a need or a cause.

They raised him to be like that, raised all of them to be cold blooded killers.

Twenty-eight to one.

Twenty-eight children wilted down, culled into perfection, into a weapon moulded from marble.

He's important to the Department. He's an Asset but even Assets will be eliminated if they cause too much trouble. He still remembers watching agents in the courtyard getting used as target practice.

Schlatt is playing a dangerous game.

The elevator slows and Dream frowns as the doors open. Three men step in, nodding to him as one presses a button.

The Huntsman tenses.

Two floors down, the elevator opens again. Two more men step in. The doors close.

The Huntsman starts to pick out weaknesses.

Four floors down, the elevator opens again. Three more men step in. The doors close.

The Huntsman waits, eager for a fight.

They've chosen the elevator because Dream can't access the earth from up here. They assume he will be weaker.

Dream is a Huntsman Spider, was the Huntsman Spider before Tommy graduated.

It's going to take more than eight men with electric batons and reinforced handcuffs to slow him down.

"Before we get started," Dream says, calmly. "Does anyone want to get out?"

A millisecond later, chaos erupts.

When Grian enters the Hermits floor, he keeps himself calm, tucking his wings back into his skin. Xisuma is nowhere to be seen but False looks up at his approach.

"Did you forget your coffee?" She asks and Grian blinks before nodding, remembering that's what he called in before he helped Dream. Just in case anyone was asking about his lateness.

“Oh, yeah. The queue was really long.” He laughs and she laughs with him, turning back to her computer.

Grian swallows, turning from her, towards the evidence room. He uses his keycard to enter before browsing through the rows of boxes.

He knows Ren recently opened it and sure enough, he finds a box that has yet to be sealed back up. Grian takes the lid off, rifles through the paperwork until he finds the flash drives.

He pockets them, puts the lid back on the way he found it. He then hunts for the box Puffy suggested, the one with the plans for the Helicarriers in it.

Gemini has left her distinct touch of a few flowers growing on the lid. He reaches in, grabbing the flash drive before shutting it and leaving.

He’s not expecting Mumbo to be standing there, holding out a mug, and jumps with a panicked chirp.

Mumbo laughs at his surprise. “Are you okay? What’s got you all freaked out?”

Grian just slumps against the wall, grabs the coffee from his hand and swallows half of the burning liquid without a second thought. It’s been a stressful day and he’s guessing it’s about to get more stressful.

Maybe he should’ve listened to his mother’s advice about working in a bakery.

“Nightmare,” Grian simply responds. He then looks at Mumbo as he asks, “isn’t Puffy supposed to be in today?”

Mumbo shrugs. “No idea. Whatever’s happening between her and Schlatt is affecting X. He’s being extra controlling.”

Grian hums. He’s known Mumbo for the longest and he knows when he’s lying.

Mumbo may not know everything but he knows enough. Now, so does Grian. He’s no longer out of the loop.

He simply fears they’re no longer on the same side.

“Are you okay?” Mumbo repeats, waving a hand in front of his face. “You seem out of it.”

Grian runs a hand over his face as he mumbles, “nightmare meant I didn’t sleep as well.” He meets his eyes. “Maybe that’s it?”

Mumbo smiles, gently bumps their shoulders together. “Maybe. Want to talk about it?”

Grian shakes his head. “It was just my mind being weird.”

“So, always, then?”

Grian punches his shoulder as Mumbo laughs.

“Shut up,” he breathes and Mumbo grins at him.

“Look, X is busy so I’m sure if you took a nap on your desk, he’s not going to have a problem with it.” He then stretches. “Enjoy your coffee!”

He leaves and Grian takes another long gulp before placing the cup on a random desk, he’s pretty sure it’s Iskall’s. He swallows his nerves and makes his way to the control room.

He needs to find a way to expose who is with the Department and who isn’t. There must be something that can prove their legitimacy.

He walks into the room, turns the computer on as the machines whir to life behind him. He takes the flash drives from his pocket and plugs them in.

There’s a second of typing, of sending the files to the local media, of working out how to possibly send the files to every screen in the building. It’s quiet and Grian finds himself relaxing.

That’s his first mistake.

He’s barely hit send when he feels something cold press against the back of his skull and he freezes.

“Grian,” Doc greets. “What are you doing?”

Friend or foe?

Grian has been at the end of a gun multiple times: it comes with the job. He’s faced off against the Angel and only survived because of his panicked chirps.

Grian has faced death too many times to count.

He’s never expected his friend to be holding his life in the balance, though.

“Doc,” Grian replies, turning around. He’s met with a black and red eye staring at him. Doc is taller than him, with a greenish hue to his skin. “Fancy meeting you here.”

He’s surprised when Ren and Cleo step into the room, Cleo shutting the door behind her. Ren has his ears pressed to his skull, eyes shifting around nervously whilst Cleo stands straight, orange hair pulled back and eyes hard.

“Is he one of them?” She asks and Doc shrugs.

“He didn’t pop up on the checks,” Ren mutters. He looks to Grian as he asks, “how close are you and Xisuma?”

“We’re friends,” Grian replies, evenly. “Just like we’re friends. Right?”

“Would you die for S.H.I.E.L.D., Grian?” Cleo asks and Grian swallows, nods, closes his eyes.

“I trusted you,” he whispers, shoulders rolling with anxiety as his wings grow desperate to pop out and curl around him protectively. “And you chose the Department over me, over everyone else? You chose murderers for what? A pay check?”

There’s a long pause and Grian doesn’t want to admit he’s scared but he’s terrified. He’s so goddamn terrified.

He doesn’t want to die.

“Grian,” Cleo says, calmly. “You think we’re part of the Department?”

Grian cracks one eye open to stare at her incredulously. “What? The minute I start uploading the files to the media to expose the Red Room and the Department, you come in here and hold a gun to my head. What am I supposed to think?”

Doc immediately lowers his weapon. “That’s what you were doing?”

Grian blinks at him. “Obviously!”

“Oh my-“ Cleo sighs. “We’re trying to work out who everyone is actually working for.”

Grian continues to blink. “And?”

“Xisuma, Mumbo, Scar and False know about the Department,” Doc says. “I found emails on their computers.”

“And how do you know about the Department?” Grian asks, suspiciously.

They all pause and Ren is the one to explain, “Doc used to work for the Beast Games, which seems to be a bunch of death games. The winner gets to be experimented on and then sold-“

“Lovely,” Grian says with a wince.

“- and Cleo won but died during the experiments. So they-“

“You died?” Grian snaps and Cleo sighs, pinching the bridge of her nose.

“-threw her out but she came back and ran. Doc was sent to find her but then decided not to until he thought Puffy’s son was sent after him to kill him for leaving.” Ren finishes, ears standing up, tail wagging slightly as he looks to Doc. “Did I get everything?”

“Pretty much,” Cleo replies for him. “I’m heading back to Russia with Doc and Ren to kill Chris, one of the Beast’s workers, for killing me.”

Grian looks between them all. “None of this seems to be clicking in my brain.”

“It is a lot,” Ren agrees. “Want to come to Russia with us?”

Grian shakes his head. "I have to be here- I can't- can't run from this."

D.C. is his home and he will fight for it, even if that means confronting his friends. Someone needs to be here for the fallout.

Someone needs to stop those Helicarriers going up.

"They will kill you, Grian." Doc says, seriously. "If you pose a threat, they'll kill you without a second thought."

Grian swallows. "Then I'll die knowing I'm on the right side."

In about a second, Tommy's mind goes through many thoughts.

He knows someone left a message of the pinky finger. He knows that could be the Red Room but Dan proves that the Room were late.

Now, Dan could be lying but Tommy is trained enough to sense that in someone. Dan wasn't lying about anything he told Tommy.

Which means, the message was about Russia, just not the Room.

And Tommy only knows one other Department X building in Russia.

"Tommy?" Leslie's voice filters across the phone line and Tommy knows he has less than a minute to explain because Leslie always keeps the same number on her phone but changes burners.

He ducks under a hail of bullets, darting through the trees.

"I need a lift to Russia!" He shouts, turning to shoot at the agents following him. None of them are spiders. "Outside the Beast Labs! I'm in Sherwood Forest!"

There's a pause and then, "look for the light."

The line cuts and he darts behind a tree to smash the phone and snap the SIM card. An agent runs in front of him and he immediately headshots them, grabbing their rifle and taking off into a sprint.

He looks for the shimmering of one of Leslie's portals as he hurdles fallen trees and dodges the gun shots.

They're not trying to take him out, just injure, just slow down. So he uses their hesitation as an advantage as he turns on them.

He picks them off before grabbing their rifles until he's used three guns and has one over his shoulder, another held to his chest.

He's panting under his breath as he runs.

It's oddly exhilarating and his blood sings with the freedom of it all. He's not scared or concerned. He's simply searching, knowing they need him alive rather than dead.

He weaves through the trees and spots the shimmering. He sprints straight towards it.

He catches Leslie moving one of her hands away from the portal and as he hurtles towards her, he can see the other portal open. Before him, lies the outskirts of Moscow.

He doesn't hesitate to throw himself from English soil to Russian snow with a quick, "thanks, Leslie!"

He skids to a halt and the portal snaps shut behind him.

For a few seconds, Tommy hunches over, calming his heart and composing himself. Then he straightens, swallows, methodically checks his weaponry as he walks towards a factory-looking building.

He approaches a reinforced door and frowns before his senses pick up on the crackle of electricity.

"Um," he mutters. "I don't know how dickhead Darien did this but- hi? Can you, like, wake up?"

There's a long pause where he thinks he's going to combust out of a mix of anxiety and embarrassment when he feels something twitch in the back of his mind.

"Hello?" A girl's voice asks and he smiles.

"Hey-" He thinks of a name and says, "Clementine. Do you like that name?"

"I've never had a name before," the voice replies. "Thank you for giving me one."

Tommy's smile widens. "Well, Clem. I'm Tommy and I need these doors open. Think you can help me?"

There's a second of groaning and then the doors start to slide back. Tommy shifts the gun in his hands, Huntsman flickering at the edges.

There's a couple of guards that Tommy headshots before strolling in.

"Hey, kid!" A voice calls and Tommy spins, gun pointed at the three approaching figures. All three immediately hold their hands up, eyes wide.

"You're Red Room, aren't you?" The man says, a German accent to his voice.

Tommy's hand tightens on the gun, finger slipping to the trigger. "I have shit to do, so if you could kindly fuck off-"

“I want Chris,” the woman says. “He killed me after the Games, thought I’d died.”

Tommy relaxes, slightly. “Revenant?” He hazards a guess and she nods.

“I guess so.”

Tommy straightens fully. “Just don’t get in my way.”

With that, he turns, and heads for the elevator. They all pile in, and Tommy worms his way to the front, eyeing them as they take out their handguns.

“Which government agency are you?” He asks, noting the model.

“S.H.I.E.L.D.,” the woman replies. “I’m Cleo, that’s Doc and this is-“

“Ren,” the man with the dog ears interrupts. “Hi.”

Tommy snorts, opens his mouth to reply when the elevator freezes in place. Clementine’s voice asks, “would you like me to bypass the restrictions?”

“Yes, please.” Tommy replies, cracks his neck, looking at Cleo as the elevator starts to drop. “How’s Dream?”

They all look between each other before Ren replies, “he’s currently being hunted by the entirety of S.H.I.E.L.D. for being a Russian spy. How do you-“

Tommy shrugs. When Tubbo and Ranboo are secure, he knows where he’s heading after this.

Well, once he has Ranboo and Tubbo, he might have to hunt down George considering Sapnap should be somewhere in this facility. Last he heard, George was in Belarus.

So, he thinks, secure his friends, grab Sapnap, find George and then help Dream.

It should be easy enough.

“Hey, Clem,” Tommy speaks. “I need to get to the cells. Can you get a read on the people they have in them?”

If they’re holding his friends and brother somewhere, reinforced cells are the best option. He would know, he’s sat in a few of them.

There’s a pause.

“They are labelled as Weapons in the database,” Clementine tells him and he shrugs.

“Give me powers and I’ll take a guess.”

“Cell four: extreme regeneration factor.”

“Sean, then.”

“Cell five: darkness manipulation, possession, reality warping-“

Tommy frowns. It almost sounds like Bad. “No idea-“

“Dark,” Doc says for him, quietly. “When I worked here, Weapon X and Z were the big shots.”

Tommy hums. “Next cell?”

“Cell seven: fire manipulation, regeneration-“

“That’ll be Sap.”

The elevator comes to a stop and Tommy lifts his gun. The doors slide open and Tommy doesn’t hesitate to spot the guard uniform and shoot.

Anyone that isn’t his family, friends or friends of friends, is dying.

Tommy doesn’t care anymore.

He steps over their bodies and follows the instructions of Clementine as she leads him through corridors and rooms. The three behind him stay close but none of them get in his way.

They pass by what must be where they live. It’s a bright kitchen and then a large living room. Tommy scans the room before moving away, through less decorated corridors and down stairs.

It gets colder, damper and Tommy ends up finding more guards.

Tommy picks them off as easy as breathing.

George trained him to be better than him and while Tommy has to look when he headshots someone, much like George, he doesn’t miss. It’s head, neck, chest. Stomach, too, if they’re rushing him.

Soon enough, he’s pausing behind a wall, removing the rifle and grabbing another one.

“Are you the Terminator?” Ren breathes and Tommy realises they’re all looking at him with wide eyes.

“I know the Red Room trained the recruits to be good but what?” Doc whispers.

Tommy just shrugs. “You want to see my brothers if you think I’m good.”

Tommy takes a breath and then turns back to the open corridor. He steadily makes his way through until he spots a large, reinforced door.

“Clem?” He asks and the door immediately groans. “Thanks. Also, do you have access to Spotify or Apple Music?”

“What would you like me to play?”

“Something fitting,” Tommy grins and Another One Bites The Dust starts playing as the door slides open.

Tommy raises his weapon and is met with a startled Niki and a man standing behind her.

“Tommy?” She breathes and Tommy grin widens.

“You wouldn’t happen to know where boob-boy and Tubs are, would you?”

She pulls him into a hug and he relaxes against her, tucking his face into her hair. He pulls away when he can smell the coppery scent of blood and notices red staining her pink hair.

“Niki,” he whispers, eyes hardening, fingers reaching up to gently tilt her head and she squeezes his arm.

“I’m okay,” she says. “I’m healing. But Ranboo- he’s been triggered.”

Tommy swallows, looks to the man behind Niki. “Who the fuck are you?”

“Squid,” the man replies, eyebrows raised. “Who are you?”

“This is Theseus,” Niki says for him and Tommy watches the way the man’s eyes immediately become guarded. His posture, once relaxed, tenses and Tommy realises he thinks Tommy’s a threat. “Tommy, this is one of the original Huntsman Spiders. He trained me.”

“Nice,” Tommy says and then focuses on her. He wants to tell her about Dan, about Ranboo being her brother, about Tubbo’s father being from the Room. He doesn’t. He can’t. Once they’re safe, he’ll explain. “Any ideas on where they are?”

“I said I wouldn’t train the kid,” Squid tells him. “So the others are probably here.”

“Others?” Tommy asks and Niki opens her mouth when Clementine interrupts.

“Someone is trying to fry my systems.”

Tommy frowns as Squid says, “that’ll be Jordan.”

“The other originals,” Niki informs him and Tommy sighs.

He makes sure to look at Squid when he says, “I don’t have shit with you, okay? Or the others. But if they try and take them from me, I’ll kill them.”

Squid’s lips twitch. “I wouldn’t expect anything less.”

Tommy nods, sees the group lingering behind him and says, “they have beef with the Beast, too.”

He turns without another glance and carries on towards the cells. Niki falls into step beside him and he reaches down to pass her a knife from his boot.

She huffs a brief laugh and they turn a corner. Down some stairs and along more corridors. He only pauses when a voice calls out, “you’re a Huntsman, aren’t you?”

He cocks his head into a room and sees a row of labs. A woman stands there and Tommy takes note of a man with a single antennae holding a child behind her.

She’s got a scalpel in her hand and Tommy would laugh at the idea of a scalpel fighting off a gun but it’s the way she stands. It’s the look in her eyes. It’s the way she watches them.

“Hey, Milena,” Squid says from behind Tommy. “Meet Theseus and Niki.”

“It’s Tommy, dick,” Tommy spits. He scans her. “You’re a Widow.”

She nods as the man behind her says, “Sean talks about you, Tommy.”

Tommy raises his eyebrows and asks, “so we’re all on the ‘let’s get the fuck out of here’ side, right? Just so we’re clear.”

The man and Milena nod as she says, “they wanted Nadezhda, my daughter, to join the program.”

Niki tenses, eyes narrowed. “No one is touching her.”

Tommy and Squid both nod when she shoots them a look. They both know the only creature able to rival a Huntsman and survive is a Widow.

Tommy would rather not end up having his windpipe crushed.

He turns, hears them all muttering between themselves as he stalks forward.

He rounds the corner and immediately turns back, grabbing Cleo to stop her as gunfire erupts. It goes on for a solid minute before it slowly dies down.

“Have I found the Beast?” Tommy calls with a grin. “‘Cause I’m pretty sure I’ve found him.”

“Don’t make me shoot you,” someone replies and Squid nudges Tommy.

“Nice to meet you, Jimmy,” Tommy shouts back. “I’d rather not get shot but I’d like to look at you if that’s an option?”

He waits and then, “go ahead.”

Tommy meets Niki’s eyes and she squeezes his wrist. She’ll find Tubbo and Ranboo if Tommy can’t.

He passes her the rifle as she hands the knife Tommy gave her to Milena.

He then slides out into the open.

He's met with the faces of at least fifty guards and three men right at the back, all wearing bulletproof vests. Their heads and necks and thighs are not covered by any protective gear and Tommy simply smiles at them, waves. Beside them, the wall is lined with reinforced doors.

The cells then.

"I'm just here for Tubbo and Ranboo," Tommy says. "You give them back, I'll stop shooting your fucking pathetic guards."

A few of them twitch and Tommy's smile turns meaner. The man in the middle steps forward, shakes his head. "The agents have already come to collect them."

Tommy tilts his head. He wasn't lying but he also wasn't telling the truth. He thinks it over before snorting. "Wait," he breathes. "Don't tell me I got here at the same time those fuckers did?"

Jimmy's eye twitches and Tommy smirks. On his leg, he taps the word 'go' in morse code.

"Oh," he hisses. "I did, didn't I?"

From the corner of his eye, Niki and Squid both pause. He taps it again and they turn.

"It doesn't matter," Jimmy says. "You won't get through us."

Tommy smiles. See, this is the thing about Tommy. He takes after George.

Dream and Sapnap both look dangerous. Well, most of the Huntsman Spiders do. They're built, clearly trained and they all have the same darkness to their eyes.

The Widows are a lot subtler. They hide their deadliness behind their grace. They look small and breakable but even some of them - Minx, Rae - have that same darkness to their eyes.

Tommy doesn't look like a trained assassin. He looks like a tall, lanky boy with messy hair.

That's what makes Tommy one of the best.

It's always easier to slit someone's throat when they don't even consider him able to hold a knife without accidentally cutting himself.

"Clem," Tommy says. "Can you do your thing for me?"

A second later, groaning begins and Jimmy's head snaps to look at the cell doors.

"How the-?" The taller one beside Jimmy breathes as the cell doors slide open.

"Sap? Sean? Mark?" Tommy calls with a grin. "Have fun."

He darts behind the wall as screaming starts. The smell of smoke hits the air and gunfire starts up.

Tommy looks to the little group standing there and smiles. "I have to go find my friends so enjoy this."

With that, he takes off back the way he came, asking Clementine for the directions to Niki and Squid.

Pogtopia aren't a big gang, but they are a formidable one. They're like vultures, moving in when the prey has already been killed.

Phil knows all about them. He's studied them, watched as they got closer and closer to the empire he built from the ground up.

They thought they could steal it from him when he was imprisoned.

They thought he was as weak as a fleeing rabbit.

But Phil is older than America. He invaded England before William came over from France and conquered the throne. He died on a battlefield long taken over by buildings and was reborn under Kristin's blessing.

According to Clara, he is the reason for powered people to exist due to her anger at Kristin's blessing of him.

Phil was a Viking. He is no fleeing rabbit, no terrified deer, no frightened mouse.

And he willingly gave up most of his power to lead a semi-normal life. He travelled, he saw the world, he fought in more battles than he can remember.

He found Techno and Wilbur and realised the government would rather use a powerful person than acknowledge that said powerful person scared them.

So he changed. He grew his empire with minimal bloodshed. He was a good man to his sons, picked up Ranboo and Tubbo because they needed a father and he refused to raise them as soldiers.

He was not his own father. His sons could be soft.

Only, he, along with his sons, were imprisoned, a gang has tried to topple his empire and his other sons are missing.

Phil tried to be a good man but he has always been a perfect soldier.

"Are you sure about this?" He asks, standing in the industrial district of the Badlands.

Wilbur smiles. It's not a nice smile, it's harsh and cold and cruel. "Ready when you are."

Phil turns his head to Techno, who's staring at his hands. "You don't have to do this, Tech," Phil whispers.

Techno looks up, meets his eyes with his own burning red. "I don't know if I'll be able to control it," he replies, quietly and Wilbur reaches over to pat him on the shoulder.

"I'll knock you out if needed," Wilbur replies. "It's not like they don't deserve it."

"Techno?" Phil asks and his son swallows.

"Stop me if I hurt you," he pleads and Phil smiles at him.

"Of course."

"Then let's go."

Phil walks forward, wings span wide. The crows from above follow behind and one flies to his shoulder. It pecks gently at his hair before head-butting his temple.

"Are you going to be my eyes?" He asks and the crow caws to him, as if agreeing. "Did Kristin send you to watch me, watch us?"

The crow caws again and Phil remembers his past battles when he would walk across bloody soil followed by a murder of crows. He got quite the reputation before he gave it up.

A lone man, entering the battlefield with blond hair tied back in Viking braids, carrying a single axe, followed by crows, leaving hundreds of bodies in his wake.

Techno stands by his side, one arm hanging loosely by his side, the other twitching. Wilbur stands on his other side, scars marring his lips and face, a streak of white in his hair.

They walk until they reach the Syndicate's warehouse, finding it surrounded by men.

The crows perch on the other warehouses, watching, waiting.

Phil stares at the supposed gang leader and nearly laughs at the confused look in his eyes. "Philza?" He asks and Phil tilts his head. "Last I heard, you were in the Vault."

"I got out," Phil says, lightly. "And you've seemed to move in."

The man smirks. "I love the shark."

"Hmm." Phil smiles at him, a smile that promises violence. "My son loves Anchor. I do hope you've looked after him. I'd hate to think what what happen to you if he's injured."

Tommy would definitely consider dismemberment if Anchor was harmed.

"I wouldn't hurt a shark," the man says with an eye roll. "You, however, are fair game."

Phil's smile widens. "What makes you think I'm so easy to kill?" He points to his damaged eye. "The Warden did his fucking best and yet he's dead and I'm not."

"I'm not the Warden, Philza." He steps forward. "I intend to take more than your home. I think Angel of Death would suit me."

Phil outright laughs. “You can have the title, mate. That’s not my name anymore.”

Once, a long time ago, he was believed to be Odin in human form.

Now, he takes that name from Tommy, his son, with a smile.

No more masks. No more hiding. No more trying to pretend to be good.

“Tyr,” Phil breathes.

Techno twists his hand, eyes burning red. Everyone before them freezes, being paralysed by the blood running in their veins, blood spilling from their noses.

“Loki,” Phil breathes.

“Everyone facing me, apart from you, shoot yourselves in the head.” Wilbur commands, his voice sickly sweet and Techno drops his hand, releasing his hold over them.

In seconds, guns are turned from them and pointed at temples.

Shots ring out. Bodies crumple to the ground like marionettes with their strings cut.

The leader stands, frozen in place.

“Go,” Phil instructs him. “Go and tell anyone who wishes to try and take the Syndicate from me that Odin is the God of Death for a reason.”

The leader shudders and starts running after he stumbles over the bodies at his feet.

“The cleanup is going to be hell,” Wilbur mutters.

Techno snorts. “We have people for that, Wil.”

“Oh I’m Technoblade and I’m the eldest so I’m so smart,” Wilbur starts to speak, voice dropping and Techno grins at him.

“So you think I’m smart, huh? Good to know-“

“I am going to stab you with a smile, fucker.”

Phil doesn’t bother trying to stop them because this is the most alive they’ve been in hours.

He pets the crow at his shoulder. “Ready to go and commit minor terrorism?”

Another crow flies down to perch on his other shoulder. It pecks at his braid he made earlier and Phil reaches a hand up on gently brush the bird’s feathers.

“You know,” he muses, “Odin had two crows: Huginn and Muninn.”

The first crow looks up at Huginn, the other pecks his ear gently when he says Muninn. He laughs.

“You like those names?”

“Just call them bastards,” Wilbur mutters.

“Or something like Corvus.” Techno adds. Wilbur snorts, starts listing other names that become increasingly more absurd.

Phil sighs. “I’m going for a Norse theme, here.”

“You’re so fucking old,” Wilbur groans, running a hand through his messy curls.

“Really, really old,” Techno adds.

Phil snorts. “You’re both little shits. C’mon. If we don’t get answers, I want to burn the White House to the ground.”

“Mission report?” Ivan asks and the Asset doesn’t even twitch, dark eyes far away.

Ivan slaps him and the Asset finally blinks, drawing his eyes from the floor. He looks up at him, something off about his gaze.

“The man on the Highway,” the Asset says, quietly. “Did I know him?”

Ivan shakes his head. “No, Soldier, you didn’t. Mission report?”

The Asset swallows. “I think I did.”

Ivan sighs, looks to one of the armed guards behind him. “Go and prepare the chair.”

The Asset’s eyes harden but he doesn’t flinch or fight. Ivan smiles: once he’s wiped, he’ll be perfect.

Tommy doesn’t expect to see the agents surrounding Tubbo and Ranboo. There are few he doesn’t know but they’re probably the originals.

Squid is standing back, hands raised as Niki falls limp in a woman’s arms.

Corpse is bleeding and Tina has a cut across her cheek. Minx has a hand on the back of Tubbo’s neck as a man stares at him with wide eyes. Rae and Brooke stand beside Ranboo, whose eyes are glowing purple.

Tommy studies Niki’s almost sleepy look-

(Standing in a ballet studio, Niki watches the girl, the best Odette she’s ever seen, pirouette with ease and smiles as Jack leans against the wall with his own grin.)

-and frowns. He grabs the knife from his other boot and without a thought, throws it.

It lands in the Widow's shoulder and all of them immediately snap their heads around as the Widow rocks back, looking away from Niki. The haze is replaced by anger in Niki's eyes and she's throwing herself at the Widow with a snarl.

Tommy grins at his friends. "Hey! If I could have Tubs and boob-boy back--"

"Hello, Theseus," the Huntsman Tommy doesn't know speaks, interrupting him. "Have you decided to come home?"

Tommy laughs, steps closer. "As much as I miss everything about the Room," he says with heavy sarcasm. "No can do."

With that, he throws himself at Minx.

Chapter End Notes

Backstories and plot development my beloved <3

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! Also I'm sorry :)

TW// Major Character Death, Temporary Character Death, mention of child death, blood, injury, death, mention of torture, mention of aftermath of torture, mention of human experimentation, mental health discussions, kidnapping, non-consensual drugging, forced incarceration, mention of past child abuse, mention of brainwashing, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sean hears them, outside of his cell. The sound of boots on the ground wake him and he sits up, prepared to be experimented on but the doors don't open.

Seconds later, gunfire starts and he freezes, listening, the Huntsman poised for an attack not aimed at him.

He grins when he hears Tommy's voice.

"Hey, Mark," he calls. "I think we're getting out of here."

"I can't wait," Mark replies, voice distorting slightly. "I'll clear a path for you--"

"Find Grey," Sean interrupts. "Make sure xe's okay."

"Watch my fire," Sapnap shouts across from where he's next to Mark's cell. "Quackity? Stay in your cell!"

"Mark, if you can grab my katanas, that'd make me real fucking happy." Sean says, cracking his knuckles.

Mark laughs and Dark is definitely trying to fight against the power dampening of the cell. "This is going to be fun. Ethan? Are you ready?"

"Hell yeah," Ethan shouts over.

There's a pause. Sean waits, counting his heart beats to calm himself.

Huntsman aren't cocky, after all, and he can't get ahead of himself. This is a fight like any other and he'll need to be careful to not injure himself into healing too much.

There's the sound of groaning, Sean grins.

"Three," he hears Sapnap say.

"Two," Sean adds.

"One," Dark finishes as the doors open.

They unleash chaos.

Tommy grabs Minx around her neck, swivels his body and tugs her to the ground, swiping the legs out from under her. He jabs his boot into the Huntsman's ankle as Niki flips the Widow, slicing them with Tommy's knife.

Corpse lunges for Niki and Tommy intercepts his wrist, snapping it without hesitation.

They all heal and Tommy is immune to their abilities. He's more than happy to inflict some wounds if it means Tubbo and Ranboo will be safe.

That's why, as he catches the kick Brooke sends him, prepared to flip her, he's not expecting someone to slam into him.

He's not expecting to dodge a punch from Ranboo.

"Ranboo?" Tommy breathes. "I know you're triggered right now but--"

Ranboo lunges for him and Tommy ducks, wrapping his arms around Ranboo to throw him to the ground.

Tina is bending the knife in Niki's hands as she smashes an elbow into the Huntsman's nose. Rae grabs her and they both end up dancing around each other, trading kicks and blows that end when Niki moves just enough for Brooke's elbow to smash into Rae's nose rather than Niki's.

Tommy moves but Ranboo is wrapping his arms around Tommy, throwing him to the ground. Tommy flips up, pausing along with most of the agents.

"Did you--" Tommy frowns. "Do you just copy me?"

Ranboo doesn't blink as Tommy swipes the legs out from under him. Just like how Tommy got to his feet, Ranboo flips up with ease.

Tommy straightens, Huntsman sensing the immediate threat in front of him.

Tommy hates it. Ranboo escaped, Ranboo was free.

He didn't have to learn to fight, to kill, to be the best weapon he could be. He got to live as a human being, with a caring family.

And now he's copying skills it took Tommy years of a wasted childhood to learn just by a look.

"It's the Beast's serum shit," Tubbo breathes, meeting Tommy's cold eyes. "He injected him and his eyes started to glow."

Tommy looks at his hand. "Was this before or after he cut off your pinky?"

Tubbo's mouth draws into a straight line and Tommy lets the rage snap inside of him.

He throws himself around Ranboo, using his momentum to slam Ranboo's head into the concrete below. Unlike an agent, who would fight the pain and try to blink the stars from their eyes, Ranboo is out like a light.

Tommy stands, cracking his neck as he looks at the agents before him. Even Niki's eyes are a little wide.

"Tommy?" She breathes.

"I'm done playing," he hisses at the older agents. "Let me take my friends and leave or I will fucking kill you."

Tommy doesn't black out.

He simply retreats into his forest.

The Huntsman Spider smiles at the agents in front of him.

He kicks at the Widow while Niki throws herself onto the Huntsman's shoulders, flipping him. She doesn't hesitate to throat punch him before flipping up and dodging Corpse.

Tommy grabs at Corpse as Niki gets thrown back by Minx. Niki faces Brooke, opens her mouth to start siren singing only for her start coughing.

Brooke's lips twitch. "God, I love luck."

Tina is there to wrap a pipe around Niki's leg, slamming her into the wall. Tina then curls the pipes around her, boxing her in. The Widow reaches a hand out and Niki's eyes go hazy.

Tommy punches Minx, accepts the kick from Rae with a grunt as Minx collapses to the ground. Brooke hits him in the nose and he can feel it break but he doesn't expect Corpse to kick and punch him so hard he slams into a glass light feature. He looks at the glass shards with an idea forming in his head.

Tina is pretty unstoppable with any weapon aimed at her. That's only if the weapons are metal, though.

He groans, snapping his nose back into place, ribs aching as he stands, hands running across the glass with a wince.

Rae grabs a set of playing cards from her pocket. She starts flipping them, fiddling with them.

Tommy can see her charging them.

“C’mon, Theseus,” the Widow hisses, wiping the blood from their nose. “Let’s think about this rationally.”

Tommy snorts and nearly chokes on his own blood. “I can’t believe someone working for a shitty organisation is trying to convince me its better there.”

“You had a purpose,” they snap. “Remember that? Remember being useful?”

“I’m a fucking kid,” he snaps back, cold anger in his blue eyes. “So are those two. We all were. We didn’t need to be useful or have a purpose because we were fucking kids.”

They step forward and Tommy mirrors them.

“Tommy, please,” Rae whispers and Tommy realises then they’ve been speaking Russian this entire time. “Don’t make this harder than it has to be.”

“I’ve already lost my childhood,” Tommy replies. “I’m not making Tubbo or Ranboo into a soldier.”

With that, he kicks at the Widow but doesn’t aim for them. He instead, hooks an arm around Tina and tugs her to his chest, glass shard pressing into her jugular.

Everyone freezes.

“Tommy,” Rae tries but he shakes his head.

“I told you,” he spits. “I’m not fucking around. Just let us go.”

“No can do,” the Widow replies. Something changes in their posture. “Are you sure you want to do this, Theseus? If you kill Tina, you’ll have to kill all of us.”

The blood in his ledger, dripping red with that of his friends.

And that’s the question, isn’t it? Who does Tommy care for more, who is he willing to lose?

Tubbo and Ranboo, along with himself, will be taken back to the Room. They will be wiped and trained and then released to the world. They will be the killers they were born to be.

But in saving them, he will have to kill his friends, the people he’s grown accustomed to.

Corpse and his brief laughs. Tina and her giggles. Rae and her smirks. Brooke and her bright smiles. Minx and her funny comments.

Friend or foe?

“I just want to be free,” Tommy whispers, looking at Rae, at Corpse.

“You can never be free,” the Widow replies, voice oddly soft, almost apologetic. “None of us will ever be truly free. Even if you kill us and run, more of us will follow. Even if you kill all of us, the Department still stands. You will never stop fighting.”

“I never wanted this,” he breathes. “Why couldn’t I just have been a kid? Why couldn’t I grow up in a nice home with nice parents and nice brothers? Why did I have to have this? Why can’t you just leave me alone?”

He hates this, hates being this.

Tommy has never been a child, never had love or affection before he was free. It was always restricted, limited. His brothers tried but they all had to be so careful.

Friendship was complacency and complacency led to death.

He is a Huntsman Spider and love is for children.

Even if he was born to the Room, he nearly got out. He nearly lived with a normal couple, nearly grew up normal.

Would he have gone to a normal school and made normal friends? Would his days have been filled with boring schoolwork and nights filled with video games and texting his friends?

Like that, in that life, if he fell, he could’ve cried at his pain without punishment. He might’ve even been comforted, a kiss on his head, a plaster to his bruised knee.

He would’ve grown up ignorant of his life, of this world.

His plans for the future might’ve been different: university ideas and college plans and career paths.

He would be ageing. He would be growing older.

Now, he’s a boy frozen in time. A boy, who knows more ways to kill than ways to cook a meal. A boy, who has killed more people than he can remember, with a ledger gushing red.

A boy, who is a Huntsman Spider. Twenty-eight to one.

A boy, who is also harbouring Life in his veins.

A boy, who is more of a weapon, moulded from marble, than a human being.

He survived because he had to, because he had no choice but to. He never wanted to end up like his classmates, dead in unmarked graves.

Tommy may have wings but he will always be stuck in a cage.

“I just want to go home,” he whispers, desperately, voice filled with pain.

Because he’s never had a home.

He had a house, a childhood house, filled with memories he will never remember, filled with the ghost of a life he will never have.

He had the Room. Despite how bloody and painful it was, it was a place to return to, a place to have a purpose, a place filled with his brothers, with clear objectives and tasks and missions.

He had the Minecrafts, with their bright eyes and kind smiles and patient nature. They were good to him, soft in ways he could never understand as a child nurtured on war.

How can he ever be warm when all he's ever known is the cold?

Maybe that's what he's asking for. Not a home but a place where he can finally be at peace.

Like his limbo, of cows and sunlight and flowers.

"Tommy," Tubbo says, quietly. His eyes are wide, a little confused but mostly scared. "It's okay."

"They're going to-" Tommy breathes and Tubbo steps closer.

"I know," he says, with a self-deprecating smile. "But you don't have to do this. Not for me. Not for Ranboo. We're going to work this out, okay? We're going to do it together. We're going to go home when this is all over and I'm going to make you cuddle up with all of my plushies."

The nest he left behind. Henry.

The thought of the stuffed animal, of his nest makes his heart ache.

"Yeah?" He murmurs and he knows it's a lie. Just like the Widow said, he will never be free.

But he has lived through the Room before.

Now, he'll do that with Tubbo and Ranboo by his side.

"I'm so tired," Tommy says and Tubbo nods.

"I know, boss man."

Tommy removes the glass shard from Tina's neck. He expects her to move quickly, knock him out before he think but she doesn't.

She turns and faces him, a sad smile to her lips.

"I'm sorry," she says, quietly and he snorts.

"So am I."

It's Corpse who grabs him. It's Corpse who quietly asks, "let me in?"

“No,” Tommy replies with a bitter laugh and Corpse’s lips twitch.

It’s Corpse who slams Tommy’s head into the wall. It’s Corpse who catches him, even with a broken arm, as he collapses. It’s Corpse who lifts him into gentle arms and carries him into the aircraft as the darkness takes him, wiping away the blood from his face.

(It’s also Corpse who brushes his fingers over Tubbo’s wrist when they’re on the aircraft, letting him drift into the darkness as well.)

It all happens in a blur.

Dream isn’t in control. The Huntsman is.

It’s a kick and a jab and a snap of bone. A scream, a hiss, a groan.

Dream isn’t pulling his punches and these men aren’t trained the way he is. They let the pain consume them even when they were so cocky at the start.

There is no precision, no thought. Just an attack that would never work.

The Huntsman Spider is created to decimate armies.

These are men with too much misplaced confidence.

Dream kills them without a care. He grabs one, snaps their neck, slams his palm to stop the elevator from dropping. He dodges a punch, kicks someone’s knee until he hears a satisfying snap followed by screaming.

He takes the punch to his jaw, jabs an elbow into someone’s throat, spins an electrifying baton onto them until they’re convulsing on the ground below.

In maybe a few minutes, they’re all on the ground. Some groaning, most dead.

He shakes off the buzz, the adrenaline of the fight in his veins.

Unlike George, who is calmer after a kill, Dream and Sapnap always get the rush of bloodlust. It’s why he was always sent into the field with George or a Widow. He needed someone to calm him.

Unfortunately for S.H.I.E.L.D., no one is here.

He looks at the metal cuff still attached to his wrist, grabs one of the batons and jabs it at the cuff until it breaks.

He was taught how to fight with these on, he knows how to get them off.

Dream opens the doors and immediately ducks as bullets fire through the doors, shattering the glass. He slams the doors shut, pressing as many buttons as possible but the elevator

doesn't move.

"Fuck," Dream says, looking out the window.

It's a drop.

He swallows.

He can almost hear Eret's voice in his head, asking in that soft tone, "you're not scared, are you, Huntsman?"

Dream takes a breath and then proceeds to jump out of the elevator.

The guards are burnt to a crisp or cut down with Sean's katanas.

Sapnap shakes off the flames on his fingers as he steps from his cell, watching Ethan's ribs drip blood. Sean is talking animatedly to a scientist while Dark hovers at the sidelines, grinning at the carnage before him.

Sapnap wants to ask about the new faces, about the woman that takes off after the retreating Beast Crew.

He doesn't because he needs to check on Quackity.

In one of the first cells, Quackity sits on a cot, staring at the door with wide-eyes.

"Sap?" He breathes and Sapnap may be a Huntsman Spider but he'll always be a human for the man before him.

He tugs Quackity into him. "I heard you," he whispers. "I heard you and--"

"You're so warm," Quackity interrupts, snuggling closer. "I'm not built for these fucking terribly insulated walls. Russia's too fucking cold."

Sapnap laughs, holds him tighter. "You're alive," he whispers to himself.

"So are you," Quackity replies before pulling back, eyes in agony. "I had to sell out Ranboo because they threatened you and put a gun to Karl's head--"

They both pause. "Karl," they whisper and Sapnap is leaving Quackity's cell to stare at Dark.

"Do you know where Karl is?" Sapnap asks.

"The last I saw him, he was passed out in the Beast's living room," Quackity adds.

Ethan looks up. "Chandler and Chris carried someone in like a day ago."

"Well," Sean says. "As much as I would love to find out the mystery of Karl, I have Chandler to gut."

The scientist beside him rolls his eyes. "I can't wait to see that."

Sean grins. "Hell yeah! Let's fucking go!"

Sapnap ignores them, walks over to the furthest cell and the sight is a strange one.

Karl is lying on a cot in the middle of the cell, clothes bleached white but eyes wide open and golden. The air around him seems to be charged, almost glitching.

Sapnap reaches out only for Dark to smack his hand away. "Unless you want to lose yourself to a time loop," he states, calmly. "I wouldn't."

"What?" Quackity asks and Dark nods to where Karl is in his frozen state.

"He's creating and destroying timelines over and over again," Dark explains. "If anyone touches him, I'm guessing he could wipe your entire bloodline from history."

Sapnap swallows. "Then how are we suppose to help him?"

Dark looks at him, almost as if he's studying him. "You'd die for him, wouldn't you?"

Sapnap meets his dark gaze without flinching. He is a Huntsman Spider, after all. He's seen worse, experienced worse than whatever Dark is.

"For him? I'd burn the world to the ground."

Dark smiles at his admission.

Then, in a cloud of darkness, he disappears. For a second, Sapnap almost calls to him before he watches the darkness appear next to Karl.

And then Karl disappears.

"Karl?" Quackity shouts. "Hey fucker! Give Karl back!"

Ethan starts wheezing. "I can't believe you just called- oh my god."

Quackity starts spitting insults and threats at him, all while Ethan laughs but Sapnap is focused on the cell before him.

A minute seems to pass before the darkness once again appears. This time, both Karl and Dark appear.

Dark looks up at Sapnap. "He should be good. A couple of hours in the void stopped the timeline generations."

"The void?" Quackity asks as Sapnap steps over. "Wait- hours?"

"Karl?" Sapnap breathes and gold eyes blink up at him. "Hey. You're safe now. Quackity and I are going to take you home, okay?"

“Sap?” Karl breathes and Sapnap grins at him.

“Hey,” he repeats and Karl surges up into his arms, face pressed against his neck. “I’ve got you. You’re safe. No one is ever going to hurt you again. I swear on it.”

He will fight to keep this promise with his dying breath.

Quackity joins them a second later. He holds Karl on his other side, running his fingers through Karl’s hair.

Sapnap feels at peace again and he barely notices when Dark and Ethan disappear.

Sure, they’re all a little battered, a little bruised. But they’re alive. He’s so, so glad they’re alive.

Of course, his happy mood has to be dampened though.

Karl pulls back to hiss, “you need- need to stop him.”

Sapnap blinks at him. “What? What do you mean stop him?”

Karl looks devastated as he breathes, “if Tommy goes, all I see is red. Everything- everything is red.”

Phil doesn’t expect to see Purpled and Charlie waiting for him.

Purpled is openly carrying while Charlie seems to be lurking at his side, hands fiddling in front of him.

“Where’s Tommy?” Purpled asks, immediately.

“Is he okay?” Charlie adds and then scans all of their faces before landing on Wilbur’s. “I see prison didn’t treat you well.”

Wilbur snorts, reaching for him to sling an arm over his shoulder. “No, prison didn’t treat me good at all. As for Tommy, we have no idea where he went.”

Purpled frowns, looks back to Phil. “Bad and the others have red eyes and they came for Las Nevadas. They threatened Punz and he- he’s gone now.”

Phil wants to reach for the boy but he knows he won’t be accepted. Purpled may be another boy he knows but he isn’t his son.

But son or no son, Phil can’t just leave him here.

Not when he looks frayed at the edges.

“We’re going to go and ask some questions,” Phil says, ignoring Wilbur muttering to Charlie about terrorism. “Would you like to join us? That way, if we find Punz, I’ll see if we can help

him.”

Purpled’s eyes go glassy as he nods. Phil smiles, and doesn’t mention the look of relief. He’s proud that his boys don’t either.

“I’ve already booked us a flight to D.C.,” Phil says.

“By that, he means our pilot is getting ready,” Techno drawls. Purpled grins at him.

“You have a private jet?” Charlie shouts. “What? When were you going to tell me this?”

Wilbur shrugs. “If you’re surprised about the plane, you’ll be even more astounded by our island-“

“You have an island!”

“Wil,” Phil groans. “We don’t own the U.K..”

Wilbur huffs. “Not with that attitude we don’t.”

Sam doesn’t know why he’s here.

All he knows is that Ponk suggested it and Foolish isn’t answering their calls and maybe Sam wants to understand.

So he steps foot into Pandora’s Vault, greeted by silence.

The government has already come and raided the place. Darien’s body is under investigation but Sam has yet to see him. He doesn’t think he can handle it.

Not yet.

So he stands in the main control room of Pandora’s Vault and breathes. Ponk is leaning against his side, muttering about moving away, buying a little cottage in the countryside.

“Foolish can build it because he loves building things,” Ponk mutters. “We can have bees. I’ve always wanted bees. And cats. I want cats. And a lemon tree.”

Sam smiles down at him. “He’s going to love a project like that.”

“We’ll have to invest in lots of forks for Drista,” Ponk continues. “Maybe a punching bag for Dream? Or just a room filled with pictures of George.”

Sam snorts and everything in him relaxes.

“I was,” he pauses, looks to the black screens. “I was thinking I should work here. Do what my brother never could.”

“Hmm, a prison guard uniform would look good on you,” Ponk agrees and Sam laughs. Ponk grins up at him. “If you’re after my blessing - seriously - then I say go for it. Foolish would too if he would answer his damn phone.”

“He’s probably busy in meetings,” Sam assures him. “I think-“

“I know you.” A quiet voice interrupts. “You’re Darien’s brother. Samuel.”

Sam blinks at the ceiling. “Pandora? How are you-?”

She pauses before saying, “the boy didn’t truly shut me down. His power is limited, however, so I am not as strong as I once was.”

“Can you still work without Tommy here?” Ponk says and then frowns. “It is Tommy right? He’s the one that did all of this.”

Sam nods as Pandora says, “so long as the boy keeps Darien’s power, I will function as I once did.” She pauses, sounds almost hopeful when she says, “are you here to continue Darien’s work?”

Sam meets Ponk’s eyes, smiles at him even if he can’t see it through the mask. “Once we have our cottage in the countryside, yes. I’m sure Foolish would love to be a guard, too.”

Ponk snorts.

Sam thinks he work with this. When Foolish gets back, they can finally fix this mess and heal together.

The hotel room is empty with clear signs of a struggle. There’s no blood but the bed is messy, the lamp is smashed and glass covers the floor.

Behind the bed, a body lays, electrical burns marring their face, a fork in their neck.

It looks like there was a brief fight before the person or people got control quickly.

Someone professional then.

Dream runs a hand over his face before walking into the bathroom. He lifts his shirt, eyeing the dark yellowing of his bruises.

He’s healing but his ankles ache from the drop to the brick he ripped from the wall. He fell a few stories before he could sense it enough.

Of course, the shooting started and he ended up falling more floors to the ground before taking off into a sprint.

He grits his teeth, washes the blood from his face, from his hair. It’s not like he can take any pain medication considering his metabolism will burn it out quicker than it can help.

He picks up more weapons, grabs a duffle bag of clothes and bare necessities before leaving.

He heads to the place Grian told them about. He takes a cab there, waits until the car drives away before grabbing his gun.

Dream scouts out the Dam Facility. It's damp, with a sharp chill but Dream has suffered Russian winters without a coat. This is nothing compared to fighting tooth and nail in only a thin shirt and shorts, blood staining the snow beneath him a dark crimson.

He walks until he hears noises and turns to find Puffy and Grian standing over a makeshift table.

He pockets the gun, quietly asks, "No sign of Foolish or Drista?"

She shakes her head. "Drista definitely killed one of them with the fork but I couldn't find them."

"Department?" Grian asks and Dream nods.

"They've always wanted Drista," Dream breathes. Puffy winces and he reaches for her. "Hey, that means they're most likely alive. They need them, that's good."

"But--"

"Mom," he whispers. "They're alive. Hold onto that."

Because when it comes to the Red Room, surviving is a triumph in itself.

She swallows. "So what now?"

"I've leaked the information of the Red Room given to us by that older agent to the media," Grian says. "Doc, Cleo and Ren have left for Moscow: Doc used to work in the Games."

Dream raises his eyebrows. He wasn't expecting that but hopefully if they can get in, they can shut it down.

"Then," Dream says. "We plan on how to take the Helicarriers down."

(In Schlatt's office, he grins down at his niece and nephew, power dampeners on their wrists, unconscious on his couches.

"You'll be safe up here," he says, red eyes gleaming. "Thank you, Bad."

The man nods. "With Puffy on the run and George distracting Dream, those a part of the Department no longer need to hide. We can start a culling."

Schlatt tilts his head. Bad seems to be the only one communicating with the strange voice that's gone silent in their heads. "The Egg wants S.H.I.E.L.D. agents dead?"

Bad shrugs. "The Egg wishes to create a new, better world but those opposing us need to be stopped before they become a problem." He looks to Drista and Foolish. "You can draw Puffy out with them."

"Soon," he says. "I'll use them before the Helicarriers go up."

Bad smiles. It's oddly sweet. "Good plan.")

Tommy doesn't know what to make of the place he wakes up in, and whilst it's most definitely not the dorm room he used to sleep in, it is a dorm.

Twenty-eight beds, all in a row. Handcuffs on the frames. A single door, he guesses to the shower room. A double door, he guesses to the corridor.

He sits up, spotting Tubbo and Ranboo asleep either side of him.

He's reminded of the last time he woke like this, with boys in beds, how that number thinned with each passing day.

Twenty-eight to one.

To him.

Twenty-eight to a boy waking to his older brother explaining how he survived the Graduation Ceremony.

Twenty-eight to the Huntsman Spider blowing up the facility with a wild stare.

Tommy stands. He's still in the same clothes but there's no window or clock to tell him what time it is. He shakes off the dizziness of unconsciousness.

He tries the first door - noticing the camera in the corner - and opens it to find that yes, it is a shower room. He swallows, shuts the door and makes his way over to the double doors.

Back in the old Room, it was locked with two guards outside.

There is no lock on this door. There are no guards.

So Tommy sends his friends one last look before shutting the door behind him.

They will have noticed he's up by now but no one comes to restrain him. Maybe they think giving him this brief amount of freedom will sooth the anger inside.

Maybe they know it doesn't matter either way.

Tommy is trapped here.

He can't leave knowing he's dooming Tubbo and Ranboo.

He finds training rooms and a canteen. Every guard he comes across gives him a wide berth. The agents pause in their activities - Tina and Corpse both stop throwing punches to watch him walk on - but no one stops him.

He's yet to find any windows or doors to the outside world.

It's the Widow that meets him in a lobby-like area.

He's investigated the lower levels of labs and found that there are some places the guards at the doors won't let him enter. There's one door blocked that he doesn't head near.

He has a feeling he knows what's behind it.

Just the thought of the chair makes his fingers twitch.

"Theseus," they greet. "I'm Sqaishey."

"It's Tommy." He replies. "If you call me Theseus, I'm taking an eyeball."

They laugh. "Sure. Tommy, it is then."

"Where's Niki?"

"In quarantine," Sqaishey says. "My powers can be a little addictive so for a couple of days, the person I'm influencing has to be kept away from me."

"Can I see her?" Tommy asks and they shake their head.

"Maybe when she's weened off it more," Sqaishey replies. "She's only got another day left."

Tommy pauses at that. "How long have we been here?"

"Two days," Sqaishey says, not a hint of lie in their voice.

Tommy blinks at them. "What? Two- two fucking days?"

Sqaishey nods. "It seems to have been a stressful few weeks for you all. The sleep was needed."

Tommy doesn't like this. Not one bit.

This isn't the Red Room. They don't let people sleep in, or rest.

Tommy still remembers coming back from missions and only getting three hours before he had to be up once again. Running on little sleep was part of the training.

Sqaishey seems to see the confused look in his eyes. "Billiam doesn't run the Room like Eret did."

"And isn't that suspicious," Tommy mutters and Sqaishey laughs.

“We only wipe the agents for a reason,” they say. “You have freedom here. You’re a Huntsman Spider, Tommy. So long as you keep up to date with your training, there’s no need for the strictness of the Room before.”

Tommy snorts. “I don’t trust that one bit. I was trained better than that.”

Nothing comes freely, easily.

There’s more than what they’re saying.

There is a price here and Tommy would assume it’s Tubbo and Ranboo but even that price seems too light.

“You don’t have to trust it,” they say. “But that’s what we were told.”

“Yeah, I stopped trusting those fuckers when I was eight and they made me fight with a broken hand because it ‘made me stronger’. No, it didn’t. It fucking hurt.”

Sqaishey simply sighs. “Look-“

“No.” Tommy interrupts. “Why?”

“Why?” They repeat with a furrowed brow.

“Why do you they want us back? What’s the fucking gain, the point?” He gestures to the room they’re standing in. “Sure, I get wanting all your toy soldiers in the same box but someone who’s tasted freedom is never going to stop wanting it. Ranboo and Tubbo are both too old to be taught and the woman’s dead so no more making recruits into agents.”

Sqaishey looks at him, studying him. He stares right back.

If this is a changed place, speaking out of turn won’t lead to a beating and asking too many questions won’t have him wiped.

“When you’re settled,” they finally say after a long moment of a silent staring contest. “I’m sure you’ll all be called up to Billiam’s office to discuss what’s going to happen from here on out.”

Sqaishey walks away and Tommy follows, noticing that they’re heading back to the dorm room. He doesn’t try to fight it, or wander off.

Once there, he walks in and sits on his bed.

“Sqaishey,” he calls before they can shut the door. “Why aren’t there any windows?”

“I thought you were an avian.” Is all Sqaishey says before the door shuts but not locks.

Tommy frowns at that, tries to wrap his head around it.

From there, it takes an hour for both Tubbo and Ranboo to wake up. The purple is gone from Ranboo's eyes but he doesn't remember anything after he picked up the phone in their house.

Tommy wants to feel angry but he knows what it's like to be triggered and Tubbo reassures him that his hand doesn't hurt.

They ask the basic questions but Tommy can only reply with what he knows.

He has no idea where they are. He doesn't know why they're here.

"We're together," Tubbo reminds him. "That's enough."

So Tommy shows them around the area before they sit down in the canteen for dinner. Brooke and Rae smile at them but don't approach.

Once they've eaten - way more than what Tommy expected - they head back to their dorm room.

"Is it- was it like this?" Ranboo asks, quietly.

Tommy lays on his bed, hands behind his head, staring up at the ceiling. "No," he replies. "We weren't given choices, we weren't allowed opinions. Even this, speaking so freely, would've had a shitty punishment."

There's a brief silence. Tommy starts to trace the patterns in the ceiling with his eyes.

"You never speak about it," Tubbo says. "Not really. I mean, you say enough without speaking, you know? We all know you don't sleep unless you're alone. You're quick to draw a knife if you're startled. We can all see that but you've never..."

Tommy keeps his eyes on the ceiling when he says, "Would you talk about it? It was hell, Tubs. Every moment was hell and the worst part- the worst fucking part was the relief of watching a classmate die."

Everyone that fell in the snow. Everyone that stumbled after getting hit. Everyone that cried when they were punched.

Those made Tommy's breath catch, his heart thunder because it wasn't him.

He would be getting a meal at the end of the day. He would be able to sleeping somewhat peacefully. He would be safe for the rest of the day.

Failure was worse than death in a Red Room agent's eyes.

But failure in others? That was glorious.

Because it meant survival.

Tommy learnt about the slowest deer getting eaten by the wolves quicker than he learnt to count. Survival of the fittest was beaten into him until it was nestled in the marrow of his

bones.

“No,” he whispers, almost to himself. “The worst part was facing yourself and knowing you were the monster under the bed, the one parents told their children about to keep them in check.”

“Tommy,” Ranboo murmurs but Tommy just blinks.

“It’s fine,” he says. “I’ve accepted it. I had to.”

Because anything less than perfection in a Huntsman Spider was weakness. Any weakness meant death.

Tommy has spent enough time at the range to know he never wants to become target practice.

“Go to sleep,” he instructs. “I don’t know what’s going on but it’s best to rest while you can.”

Sleep doesn’t come easy and a part of him can’t help but stare at the handcuffs, wondering if the familiarity of it will ground him.

But he doesn’t.

Tommy doesn’t have to do that anymore.

He passes out and wakes to the lights being on.

He stands, uses the bathroom and shower before rousing the other two. There are new clothes in the boxes by their beds and Tommy is surprised to find it’s not the usual recruit uniform.

Just a long-sleeved t-shirt and cargo trousers.

When they’ve all changed, they go to the canteen and eat. Once again, it’s mostly empty apart from Corpse, who keeps his distance.

Sqaishey said the agents were only wiped for a reason and the agents clearly remember him. Yet they’re still here. They’re not fighting back or rising up.

Tommy knows most of their triggers are gone but yet they’re compliant without being wiped.

It’s more than a little unnerving.

But of course, the peace is short-lived.

Sqaishey finds them in the canteen and leads them away. Tommy goes first. He has dealt with this before and sure, he’s used to getting three meals a day and seven hours a night and hugs but he can handle this.

His body may not be scarred but his mind will always be damaged from his past.

Those scars will forever be etched in his memory.

They walk up a flight of stairs and Tommy has to catch Tubbo as his wings flutter to stabilise him. Tommy immediately looks around himself, hackles raised but there's no one but them on the stairs.

That's when Tommy realises why Tubbo tripped.

Because the wall by the stairs is glass.

And outside that glass is clouds.

It looks like snow. Pure, white snow. But the blue sky touches it in tufts, not in a thin line. It's clouds.

They're in the clouds.

"We're in the clouds," Tommy whispers.

"Yes," Sqaishey says.

"Belarus?" He breathes and they smile at that.

"A front." They continue up the stairs and Tommy doesn't hesitate to follow. "Billaim started to construct this when we were loaned out to him. The woman was focused on finding her God-Killer and we were only useful for the children we could produce until Billiam stepped in. The facility moves and is hard to detect with the shielding."

Tommy hums. The woman did find her God-Killer. "So this where you've all been hiding."

They round the corner and are met with large, reinforced doors. They pause as the light at the top clicks over from red to green and the doors groan open.

Before they can enter, a man is stepping out. With rosewood hair, tusks sticking out from his mouth and red eyes, Tommy swears he should remember him.

He doesn't.

"I've heard you go by Tommy now," the man says.

Tommy gives him a short nod, finding himself straightening almost subconsciously. "Yes," he says, catching himself from adding sir at the end.

The man's lips twitch before he looks behind Tommy at Tubbo and Ranboo. "I'm Billiam," he says and starts to walk back down the stairs. "I would explain a few things but I suppose showing you would be easier."

"Showing us what?" Tommy asks but Billiam doesn't respond and Tommy can't make himself push for answers.

His brain is tricking him, telling him this is a superior who needs to be obeyed. He shakes the feeling off.

They walk down the stairs, through the corridors and to a ballet studio. A set of guards stand at the mirrors, guns held loosely in their hands.

Tommy immediately doesn't like this.

He swallows, keeps his eyes flicking between the threats facing them. He will keep Ranboo and Tubbo safe. They will face this threat together.

"Lethe," Billiam says and Tommy tenses. "Or Ranboo, is it? Go and stand over there."

Ranboo looks to Tommy and he nods, trying to work out what's going to happen. Ranboo reluctantly goes, hands fiddling in front of him.

Tommy wonders if he should've told Tubbo and Ranboo about their parents. Would that knowledge make this easier, knowing their parents survived this and so they can too?

"Good," Billiam says. "Tubbo, correct? Go and stand with Ranboo."

Tubbo also checks with Tommy before making his way over to Ranboo.

Tommy waits but is given no command. The Huntsman flickers at the edges, waiting for something, anything so that he can understand the situation at hand.

Well, that's a lie.

He can see what is being set up.

He's been where the guards are, holding the same weapon, waiting for the command.

Tommy swallows, face losing all colour. The Huntsman flickers and leaves. There are too many warring emotions inside.

"Tommy," Billiam says. "I've heard reports you were the one to kill Clara."

"Yes," Tommy breathes.

"Now, I don't want this to come off as a punishment," he says and Tommy's blood runs cold.

"But you must understand, currently your loyalties are unknown. Wiping you would be useless if you had this disobedient streak running through you."

Tommy is going to be sick.

Or he's going to faint.

Alarm bells are ringing in his skull and his stomach is flipping and Tommy cannot breathe. There is not enough oxygen getting to lungs, to his brain.

The world is being flipped upside down.

Billiam snorts. "Well, with that I guess you take after your father."

Tommy can't move.

He's frozen in place.

This is Wilbur all over again.

Because Tommy is a Huntsman Spider. He's a cold blooded killer that's never had any issues with pulling the trigger.

But this?

How will he survive this?

"Prove it to me," Billiam says, faux softly, red eyes burning. "Prove to me you were the one Clara was destined to train."

Tommy swallows, hisses out, "How?"

Billiam looks at him and Tommy knows the answer to his question.

He's not been given a gun for a reason. Billiam thinks he's being lenient, merciful like this. Or he doesn't want Tommy to inherit their abilities.

"Choose."

Tubbo let's out a strangled whimper and Ranboo's eyes widen in panic. Billiam turns to face them.

"Hush," he snaps. "If you try to run or so much as twitch, I'll have you shot there and then. It's the Asset's decision."

Tommy wants to run or cry or scream.

It can't end like this. It can't.

He meets Tubbo's terrified eyes, wings flapping in fear. But there is no where to fly to. They are trapped in a room without a window and with a single door blocked by guards.

Brown eyes and brown hair and bee's antennae and wings. Smaller than Tommy but so much more chaotic.

His first friend.

He looks to Ranboo and finds an odd calm to his features. Split black and white hair, brown eyes and a soft, sad smile. Taller and lankier than Tommy but so much more sarcastic.

His second friend.

Together they stand, awaiting Tommy's decision. Who lives and who dies? Who is Tommy to decide such a thing?

His best friends.

“Your time is running out, Huntsman,” Billiam breathes. “Don’t get yourself trapped in a waterspout, walls too slippery to climb. Build your web and hunt like the Spider you are.”

Tommy only notices then that he’s shaking all over. A subtle, all-consuming shudder.

At that same point, he understands why Ranboo looks so calm.

He remembers their discussion back in Tubbo’s cave. Ranboo had said that if it came down to it, Tommy should pick Tubbo over himself.

Tommy swallows, straightens, retreats into the safety of his forest.

He knows this game, knows the rules.

He knows that it what he asks for will not be given without a price.

“Tubbo,” he says, voice as shaky as his entire body.

For a brief moment, Ranboo’s eyes snap to his, betrayed. Tubbo’s eyes widen, also betrayed, but mostly so, so frightened that it physically pains Tommy because Tubbo wants to live.

Unlike Tommy, who has accepted death as part of his childhood and career path years ago, these boys have life burning through their veins.

But then, the guns raise and Ranboo is shot down.

Three bullets. One to the head, one the chest and one to the stomach. He crumbles, falls, collapses.

Tubbo screams.

Ranboo lays on the ground, a pool of blood spanning across the floor, staining the wood red.

“Good,” Billaim says, clapping Tommy on the back. He then turns, Sqaishey following hot on his heels. The guards don’t move though and Tommy can’t make himself move either.

He can’t breathe.

Ranboo is dead.

There is no rise or fall to his chest.

He is simply there. Not moving. Not breathing. Just gone. Dead.

“Oh, Theseus?” Billiam calls and Tommy instinctively looks up from Ranboo’s fallen body at his name. He’s met with a savage grin. “The Red Room isn’t fair. A Huntsman would not need to choose.”

He nods and Tommy is confused for a split second.

And then the shots ring out.

Tommy, despite all of his training, flinches at the sound.

He meets Tubbo's panicked stare as he lifts his hand to his neck, dark blood falling through his fingers.

He collapses to the ground with a pained whine.

And Tommy?

Tommy breaks.

Chapter End Notes

I suppose this is a bad time to say I'm taking a week's break... haha... I'm sorry <3

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

And we're back!

TW// major character death, death discussions, violence, blood, graphic depictions of injuries, mention of child death, mention of human experimentation, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Phil is not sure what he expects when he arrives in D.C.. Sure, he knew that threatening the President of the United States wasn't smart on his part.

But it was funny.

Especially when Wilbur compelled some of the US military to start dancing while Techno paralysed anyone who tried to get close to them. Jack, who met them on the tarmac with a duffel bag and grin, spent most of the time pointing out weaknesses in the White House's structure.

After making their point increasingly clear - what happened at Pandora's Vault will never happen again because anyone who chooses to get in Phil's way, will suffer the consequences - their faces have been splashed across the news, along with footage depicting their treatment at the Vault courtesy of Sam.

So Phil expects to go to a hotel and wait to hear about some changing regulations.

He's not expecting to see the Red Room on their screens.

He's not expecting to see news reporters discuss the footage of children being taught how to fight and kill.

He's not expecting to head over to the Triskelion, dread curling in his gut because he can feel death lurking in the air.

He's definitely not expecting Bad to be smiling at him, with glowing red eyes. Purpled lets out a wounded noise at the sight of a stoic Punz and Charlie is sliding in front of him in a protective stance.

"Phil," Bad greets. "Fancy meeting you here."

Phil's wings curl high in an arch. "I go where death takes me. Where's Puffy?"

"Probably with her brother if everything is going to plan." Bad smiles at him and Phil's eyes narrow.

"What the fuck does that mean?" Wilbur says, voice hard.

"You know the Red Room," Bad says and Phil, along with his sons, Jack, Charlie and Purpled all tense. "They like having options."

"Drista," Techno breathes. "The Room's wanted her since they got Dream."

Bad's smile widens. "Isn't it a perfect plan?"

"That doesn't explain why you're here," Phil says, trying to keep himself calm.

"We're waiting to see if Schlatt follows through," Ant speaks. "If he doesn't, we're here to fix his mistakes."

"And the whole-" Skeppy says from Bad's other shoulder, waving his hand at the sky.

Bad reaches over, touches his shoulder and shakes his head. Skeppy nods and the red of his eyes burns hotter.

Bad turns back to Phil. "We serve the Egg. We have no fight with you."

"You have a fight with me when it involves my family," Phil spits. "Tommy is too smart to get caught by any other government but his own. Where is he? Where is Tubbo, Niki and Ranboo?"

Bad keeps his carefree smile. "Don't mess things up for us, Phil."

Phil steps closer. Bad mirrors him. "Where is my family?" Phil hisses, feathers puffing up.

It happens in the blink of an eye.

Bad reaches for him. Phil reaches back. Their skin touches and they both pause.

(The Egg tries to latch onto Phil, he will be a great help if he's on their side but there is nothing to grab. There's a barrier encircling the man, stopping any red vines from getting to him.)

Phil's death touch doesn't work. Bad doesn't even twitch or flinch.

"It seems we're at an impasse," he mutters and Bad laughs.

"Yes." He let's go and steps back. "You're going to interfere, aren't you?"

Phil snorts. "Yes."

Bad sighs. "We could've been a great team, Philza."

“We could’ve.” Phil agrees as the crows appear. “But that was before you hurt my family.”

They have a pretty good plan.

Puffy will go in through the maintenance entrance, to get to the main cameras, while Grian helps Dream get into the underground facility that houses the Helicarriers.

They’re going to shut them down before they can ever get into the sky.

Of course they have a back up plan. Dream is a Huntsman Spider: he’s completed enough missions to know how easily something can go wrong.

They have keycards that are swapped out in the inner structure of the Helicarriers - Dream is buying Grian whatever he wants when this is over - if they do go up which will turn the Helicarriers on one another.

It’ll be messy but efficient.

It’s how Dream finds himself waiting for Grian to slip through security and open the back door for him.

It’s also how Dream finds himself meeting dark, familiar eyes.

For a second, he freezes.

It’s George and he’s not hiding. Well, he is but it’s in plain sight. His combat gear is hidden by a thick coat and his hood is up.

His skin is pale and his eyes are dull but it’s George.

Dream’s George.

He does what would’ve got him shot in the Red Room: he abandons his mission.

He leaves the wall he’s resting on and starts walking towards George, who doesn’t start running or shooting him. Dark eyes watch him and only when there’s a few metres between them does he turn and start to walk.

Dream, despite all alarm bells in his head ringing, follows.

Dream knows this won’t end the way he plans it to.

George isn’t his George anymore. He’s theirs. He’s the Winter Soldier.

Following him like this is a death sentence; he might as well start writing his eulogy but this is George. Dream can’t abandon him. Dream couldn’t abandon Sapnap or Tommy if they were triggered like this.

So he allows himself to be led away from the back entrance, away from the crowds and to a quiet area, near the front entrance.

George stops, turns to face him.

Dream steps closer, trying to see if there's any indication of recognition there.

"George," he breathes and dark eyes lock onto his. "I know you probably don't remember me but I need you to come back to me, okay?"

George doesn't even twitch, he just continues to stare at him unseeingly.

Dream sighs and places a quick kiss on his forehead. "I'm sorry I didn't follow you to Belarus--"

There's a pinch at his wrist and a metallic snap.

Dream looks down to see power dampener handcuffs lock over his wrists and George removing a syringe from his vein.

Dream blinks the exhaustion away, swaying on his feet.

"Target acquired," George says, faintly, as if Dream's head is underwater.

And then, without any hesitation, Dream's head is smacked into the concrete wall behind him by George's hand.

The three leaders of the Beast Labs never make it out of their facility.

Sean finds Chandler, katanas spinning in his hands as he hunts.

He is Weapon X.

He is also a Huntsman Spider.

It's rather easy to disarm Chandler - literally - and press the edge of a katana blade back on the scar of his ribs.

"I told you I was going to finish the job, didn't I?" Sean breathes and then drags the blade across his skin, cutting in as his other katana comes up to cut his throat.

Sean smiles at Grey as they follow Dark and Ethan out of the facility.

Chandler dies, alone.

Chris stumbles into Sapnap, Karl and Quackity as they're leaving. His eyes are wide and fearful as he starts to beg for his life, explaining that he never wanted to hurt Karl, that they're friends.

Karl sees hundreds of timelines flit across his vision.

He ignores all but one.

He puts his hand over Sapnap's as he raises his gun and plucks the weapon from his grip.

Hand steady, he shoots Chris in the chest.

"You were never my friend," Karl murmurs. "Friends don't experiment on friends."

He hands the gun back and together, a fiancé either side of him, they leave the facility.

Chris dies, alone.

Cleo finds Jimmy rapidly trying to get the fried control board to work. There is no signal for his phone and when he tries to shoot her, the bullets do nothing.

She's dead. Nothing can kill the dead.

She steps close to him and his begs fall on deaf ears.

"Help the survivors of the Games," she tells Doc and Ren. They both nod.

Cleo snaps Jimmy's neck.

Jimmy dies, knowing he failed.

Her own body crumples beside his. Ren catches her, cradles her in his arms as she takes her final breath.

Cleo dies with her friends beside her.

Dream wakes to the sound of Puffy pleading in broken, hoarse tones. He clocks Drista immediately, her eyes closed in slumber, chest rising and falling evenly.

He turns his head to see Puffy up, blood dripping from her temple as if she's been pistol-whipped. Something dark and ugly burns in Dream and he looks to the metal cuffs on his wrists, blocking his abilities and too strong for him to manually break.

They seem to be in a side room, a lobby of sorts. Dream thinks this is Schlatt's floor in the Triskelion.

He dislocates his thumb, slides his hand out of the cuff and pops it back in place without a wince. He's about to dislocate the other thumb when he sees him.

George.

He still has the blank stare of being wiped. Even Dream wasn't able to break through.

The thought makes Dream stand and put himself between George and Drista. His sister is defenceless and while the rest of them - Foolish is awake in the corner, by George - may not win a fight against George, at least they can survive for longer than an unconscious girl.

“George,” Dream says, almost desperately but the man doesn’t turn.

“Dream,” George’s Handler says in English beside him - Dream thinks his name is Ivan - looking at the cuff hanging loosely from his wrist. “That poison in your veins is limiting your abilities. I wouldn’t try anything.”

“Let them go,” he says. “I’m the Huntsman Spider, they’re of no use to you.”

“Oh but they are,” Ivan says with a grin. “Schlatt seemed to disagree considering he handed them over oh so easily when I asked. With the new Red Room operational, I feel like I’m in need of a promotion and presenting you and your family on a silver platter should boost my ratings.”

Dream steps closer, blocking Puffy from view when Ivan turns to her. “You touch them, I kill you.”

“What does your mother think of that?” Ivan laughs. “Her little boy, threatening such cruel things.”

“You hurt them, I’ll kill you myself,” Puffy hisses and Ivan’s smirk widens.

“Such bite,” he says and then tilts his head. George straightens immediately. “Let’s see if we can stop that. Hmm, we need the girl. She’s young and you- you have potential but-“

Dream’s body locks. “Don’t,” he whispers, and Ivan looks to Foolish, who’s awake but clearly dazed.

“Asset,” Ivan says, lifting his own gun to aim at Puffy when Dream shuffles closer. “We don’t need him.”

“Please, George,” Dream tries again, desperately as he dislocates his other thumb.

It’s too late, though, as George makes eye contact with him, raising his glock and pointing it at Foolish’s temple.

George has never needed to see his targets for him to be able to hit them.

His finger drops to the trigger-

(A part of the Asset hesitates.

He thinks he should know the man before him. It’s shape of his brow and the harshness of the scar and the way he says that name with such reverence-

Whoever George is, they must be lucky.

But the Asset has a mission and anything other than the mission doesn't matter, is irrelevant.

He looks into those bottle green eyes and shifts his finger to the trigger.)

-and he pulls it.

Foolish slumps and Puffy screams and Dream-

Dream is moving before he can blink.

He slams into George, kicking the legs out from under Ivan, snapping the gun away from his hands. George's head hits the wall as the cuff clatters to the ground.

Something flickers there but Dream doesn't notice. He grabs the gun and aims it straight for Ivan.

He collapses, dead, after three bullets to the chest.

George flips him, all nimble and quick, and when Dream flips up, George is gone.

"Puffy," he breathes, snapping his head between Foolish, the place George used to stand and Puffy's agonised face. "Mom."

She looks up at him, tears in her eyes as he hands her the key from around the Ivan's neck. With the power dampeners on, she couldn't change the probability of Foolish surviving.

Her hands grip the side of Foolish's face delicately. If he didn't have the hole in his temple, he'd look like he was sleeping.

"Can you kill them?" She asks as he unlocks Drista's cuffs and Dream looks at his older brother, a brother he will now outlive.

"Yes," he says because George just killed his brother and Dream can't play by the Room's games anymore.

He can't kill George, it would feel like he's killing himself, but he can stop him. Dream has learnt if he can't save someone, then the only option left is to stop them.

"Go," she replies, eyes burning through the tears. "I can handle it from here."

Dream swallows and nods. He checks the magazine and after spending one more second to stare at Foolish's still face, he takes off after George.

Grian sits in the main control room of the Triskelion's upper floors, watching as Iskall and Gemini argue over a packet of skittles, all while Scar and Mumbo start betting on who's going to eventually get it.

Dream didn't show up, even when ten minutes became an hour.

Grian is worried.

Actually, Grian is more than worried.

Dream should've shown up but he didn't.

It's more than a little concerning.

What's more concerning is that Grian is trying to shut the Helicarriers down by himself, without any help from someone a lot more skilled than him.

So he laughs along with his friends, all while frantically typing away.

He has no idea when the Helicarriers are going up but he can hopefully stop them.

Of course, his plan goes out the window the minute he hears Puffy's voice over the speakers.

"Attention all S.H.I.E.L.D. agents, this is Captain Puffy," she starts. "You've heard a lot about my son these past few days. Some of you have even tried to hunt him down. I think it's time you know the truth: S.H.I.E.L.D. is not what you think it is. It's been taken over by Department X with Schlatt, my brother, as their leader."

She takes a shuddering breath and Grian looks around, watching how silent and still everyone is.

"I don't know how many more agents there are. They could be standing right next to you. They almost have everything they want: absolute control." She takes another subtle breath. "They shot and killed Foolish, my son."

Grian freezes. Foolish is-

Foolish can't be dead.

Because if Foolish is dead, that means Dream is going to be on the warpath.

"If you launch those Helicarriers, they will be able to kill anyone in their way, unless we stop them. I know I'm asking for a lot but the price for freedom is high and it's a price I'm willing to pay. If I'm the only one, then so be it, but I can bet I'm not."

The speakers fall quiet.

Mumbo stands up, looks at Scar. "Preempt the launch sequence. Send those ships up now."

Scar stares at his screen before looking over at Mumbo. He swallows and then looks back to the screen.

"Is there a problem, Scar?" He asks, eyes narrowing.

"Mumbo," Scar breathes and then straightens. "I'm not going to launch those ships." He meets Mumbo's eyes. "Captain's orders."

Mumbo doesn't hesitate to pull a gun and press it to Scar's skull. "Step away from your station, traitor."

"I never worked for you," he hisses back. "I've always worked for Scott."

"Like he said," Gemini says, pulling out her gun and holding it next to Mumbo's head. "Captain's orders."

The entire room suddenly starts pulling out weapons, all turning on each other. Friend again friend.

Grian grabs Iskall, hisses under his breath, "Go to the landing docks."

Iskall stares at Grian. "You're--"

Grian rolls his eyes. "Do I look capable of hiding a secret like this?"

Iskall snorts and grabs a few of his team. They slip out of the side door. Grian keeps his eyes on Gemini and Mumbo.

"You're on the wrong side," Mumbo hisses.

"That depends on where you're standing," Gemini replies.

Mumbo removes the gun from Scar's head. Gemini keeps her gun raised. Mumbo releases a sigh and between blinks, there's a knife in his hand and he's slicing at Gemini.

Mumbo then catches the gun from her hand and starts firing. Gemini kicks the chair out from under Scar so that he doesn't get shot and Grian throws himself under the desk.

By the time it's quietened down and he lifts his head, Scar is sitting back in his chair, eyes wide.

"I can't stop it," he says.

Grian walks over, placing a hand on his shoulder. "Then we minimise it and help Puffy in any way we can."

"What about Mumbo?" Gemini asks, ripping the end of her shirt to tie it around her bleeding wrist.

"He'll be going to regroup with Xisuma and False," Grian says and then looks to Gemini. "Can you kill her?"

"Can you kill Mumbo?" She asks.

Grian swallows. "If it means stopping those Helicarriers going up, yes."

Tommy doesn't just break.

He shatters.

Time seems to slow.

Tubbo's blood hits the wood, spilling into Ranboo's until it's a bright, red stain.

Tommy stares at the red, thinking all the way back to his first kill with Eret. The weight of the gun in his small hands. The person tied to the chair with a bag over their head.

The decision.

Tommy had pulled the trigger because he was Theseus, he was going to be the Huntsman Spider.

And Theseus, along with the Huntsman, didn't care how many people had to die.

He didn't care about the blood in his ledger.

All he cared about was survival.

This?

This isn't survival.

Tommy isn't Theseus anymore.

And the Huntsman can't cope with the amount of pain and anger he's feeling.

This is all him.

It builds and builds inside of him and time seems to stop altogether.

His blood boils and burns and his breathing picks up. It feels like when he graduated, that sensation of being pulled apart and being put back together again.

Only this time, it doesn't hurt. It isn't agony.

It feels like relief.

The heat burns at his heart and his vision flickers, shifts. The world becomes more saturated, more warm.

He can make out seven strange balls of light nestled in the chests of the people around him. They're all deep blues, swirling colours that look like a galaxy, with a white glow around them.

Ranboo's, however, is becoming paler and paler.

Tubbo's is much the same, the light is getting brighter.

Both of them, along with Sqaishey, have a few gold cracks in the swirling galaxy. Tubbo's has only a few golden strands, Ranboo has a few more while Sqaishey's has a lot more gold in it.

Tommy blinks and his gaze flicks to the light from his veins. No longer is red and blue facing him.

No.

It's gold.

Not even that fake yellow-gold colour. His veins are glowing the colour of liquid gold.

He stares at the glow, blinking rapidly as the growing heat rises up his throat. It's like being trapped in one of Sapnap's hugs but the heat is getting hotter, stronger.

Tommy tries to rein it in.

It feels too much. An all-consuming forest fire burning up his chest.

"Why?" He finds himself asking, eyes focused on the blood. "Ranboo has-" He catches himself, the heat increases. "-had the Beast serum. Both are children of the Room. Why kill them?"

"You're a God-killer, Theseus. They're just collateral." Billiam huffs, still walking away and everything inside of Tommy burns.

His friends are not just collateral.

His friends are not just anything.

His friends are some of the best people he knows. They're kind and good and they wanted to live.

The heat races to his hands, builds in his chest and Tommy-

Well, Theseus would not care like this. Theseus would think of survival, would follow Billiam like a good Huntsman Spider.

But he's Tommy now.

And like Sapnap said about feeling is to be human, Tommy burns with emotions.

It's overwhelming.

"Show them," the woman breathes inside of his mind, with her black hair and star-like eyes. "Show them why you're my God-killer, Theseus."

So he lets it out.

The heat races from his palms as his head tilts back. The power bursts inside of him, exploding out in a wave of simmering gold.

It moves like a protective shield and pushes at the guards sending them into the mirrors, at Billiam, who gets thrown against the corridor wall. It barely touches Sqaishey, as they dive away, clearly sensing something.

The gold may look pretty but Tommy watches as it rips the guards apart, snapping their necks. The glass of the mirrors smashes at the impact, glass shards raining down on the wooden floor. Billiam is thrown back but Tommy catches sight of what looks like red vines curling up his neck.

The doors to the studio slam shut and as the golden light flickers before dissipating, Tommy collapses to his knees. He hangs his head down, panting as he wiggles the pins and needles sensation from his fingers.

(Kristin, at first, doesn't know what wakes her.

Fear grips her thinking her husband or one of her sons has slipped through the veil until she sees it.

The gold.

Life, awakened and burning with power.

She smiles. “Atta boy,” she whispers.)

The gold still shines in his veins and when he looks up to stare at the damage, his gaze falls onto where some of the shattered mirror sits. Instead of meeting blue eyes, his eyes are liquid gold. Just an endless pool of liquid gold.

He can't help but stare at himself like that.

A boy with blond hair and a pale face and gold for veins and eyes.

A whimper pulls his eyes away from himself to Tubbo.

He's a crumpled heap on the ground, a wound to his hip, his stomach, and the neck wound that won't stop bleeding. His eyes are wide as they meet Tommy's and Tommy pushes his way through the sudden exhaustion to kneel by his side.

“Tubbo,” he breathes, hands frantically pressing at his neck.

Tubbo's wings are fluttering, antennae pressed against his skull. He goes to open his mouth and Tommy shakes his head.

“Don't,” he hisses. “Don't- don't try and talk. Just try and breathe, okay? Keep breathing.”

Tommy knows it's better to count his losses now. Better yet, grab one of the guards' guns and make it a quick death.

He's been in this business long enough to know a fatal injury from one that can be saved.

Tubbo will not survive this. No matter what Tommy tries to do - the pressure, a transfusion, poorly done stitches - Tubbo will be dead within a few minutes.

Tubbo opens his mouth again, even as Tommy shakes his head to stop him but the boy just lifts a bloody hand to Tommy's cheek. He wipes a stray tear away and Tommy-

Tommy doesn't know when he cried last.

The Room didn't allow such childish things as crying. It was seen as a weakness.

But Tommy doesn't care about the Room's expectations of him anymore.

He was willing to play their games because Ranboo and Tubbo were going to be with him, every step of the way.

Now, they're both lying in a pool of their own blood.

"I'm sorry," Tommy whispers to Tubbo, hands becoming sticky with blood. "I'm sorry I couldn't save you. Or Ran- Ranboo. I thought- I didn't want to kill Tina and I'm so- I didn't want to run anymore, Tubs. I'm sorry. I'm so fucking sorry."

Tubbo wipes another tear from Tommy's cheek and he gives him a smile.

A small, bloody smile.

Tommy smiles back as his eyes water.

He can't lose him. He can't.

Losing Ranboo is one thing but losing Tubbo, too?

But Tommy doesn't know how to save him. There isn't any medical equipment in the ballet studio and even that would only hold off the inevitable for a few more minutes.

The thought of another name joining that ledger of red, Tubbo's name joining Ranboo's, makes the heat in his chest pick up again.

He looks to the gold of his veins and freezes.

Because the woman changed him, changed them all. He went from a boy to a Huntsman Spider, Life trickling through his veins, making him stronger and faster and-

And he could heal quicker. A simple cut took less than a minute to heal.

Very few of the agents have scars. Corpse and his burns. Dream and the facial scar Tommy gave him.

Tommy looks down at Tubbo's eyes, as they start to flutter close.

He can't.

He can't subject Tubbo to that pain.

It could kill him anyway. The Black Widow recruit in Tommy's year didn't survive graduation.

Tubbo would be changed permanently. He'd be frozen in time like Tommy.

Tommy knows Phil is waiting for when the boys felt comfortable enough to become reapers.

But Tommy doesn't have the time and Tubbo is too far gone to agree or disagree.

Tommy presses hard against Tubbo's neck. The white is curling around that strange ball of light in his chest.

Tommy wonders if he'll get the white in his hair too.

Will Tubbo ever forgive him?

Will it matter?

"Tubbo," Tommy hisses but the boy doesn't respond. His eyes are closed yet there is a weak pulse against Tommy's fingers that's slowing to a halt. "Tubbo, I need you- stay awake. Please. Please don't leave me. Tubbo, please."

Tubbo doesn't respond. Tommy snuffles, blinking the tears from his eyes as he presses harder even as less and less blood leaks from the wound.

"You can't," he breathes, voice broken. "You can't leave me. Please. C'mon."

How did the woman do this?

Tommy doesn't know. He just pushes harder.

"Heal," he spits. "Heal, dammit! Come on! Heal! Don't fucking leave me! Don't fucking-Tubbo!"

He can't lose him.

He can't.

Not his first friend. His best friend.

And then-

Heat races from his chest, down his arms to his fingertips.

Tommy watches as a golden thread reaches out from his fingertips to the strange ball of light in Tubbo's chest. It curls around it, as if searching before latching onto a golden crack.

Tommy doesn't let go, even as he hears a slam from the doors behind him.

The doors do not open.

He ignores the shouts, focused on that golden thread.

"C'mon," he begs. "Fight, Tubbo. Don't give up on me now. Please. Heal. Just heal. Please."

There's a long moment where the thread weaves around the ball of light.

Then, it snips away from Tommy and wraps tight around the dark blue ball.

Tommy waits, not moving, as the white glow starts to dissipate. Tubbo's pulse picks up.

Only when Tubbo's eyelids twitch does Tommy pull his hands away to see the wound at his neck sealing shut.

Tubbo's eyes open, brown meeting golden and he blinks, face scrunching up into pain.

Tommy winces. "I know, I'm sorry. It's gonna suck for a while but you're alive. Okay? You're alive."

Tommy shifts to look at Ranboo's body.

His eyes are closed, chest still but the white hasn't consumed the strange ball of light in his chest yet. Unlike the guards behind Tommy that have a full-white light.

Tommy reaches for Ranboo, ignoring the way his body wishes to collapse and sleep.

He has to try.

For Tubbo, for their family, for Niki.

He presses his hands over the wound on his chest.

"Ranboo," Tommy whispers as shouts from behind the barred door kick up a notch. "As much as I bitch and shit, you're not a pussy, okay? And you're not allowed to die like this. You may not be a Huntsman, but you're about to graduate, okay? And us Huntsman fight. We fucking fight."

He pushes his hands down, calls upon that same heat until another golden thread goes from Tommy, to curl around the almost white light.

"You're not allowed to leave me either, boob-boy. I haven't finished harassing you yet."

The gold thread tightens around the white light and Tommy watches as the white starts to recede.

"C'mon," he breathes. "Please."

It takes a few minutes, but the white has mostly gone. A few cracks of it remain and Tommy wonders if Wilbur and himself have the same white cracks of dying but coming back.

The bullet popping out of Ranboo's forehead and the skin sealing shut draws his attention. The minute the wound is fully healed, he watches the golden thread cut.

Ranboo's eyes snap open and he gasps, pitching sideways. Tommy grabs him, steadies him.

"You're alive," he whispers, body feeling like lead. "You're alive, okay? Just breathe."

Ranboo calms and Tommy collapses back against the wall as his friends lay before him alive but changing.

He wants nothing more than to sleep but he can't. Not when he needs to be there if something happens to them. Not when the door only remains shut with his strange new powers.

So instead of sleeping like how his body wants, he shuffles himself forward to grab the guns off the dead bodies of the guards before shuffling back to rest against the wall.

Tommy is exhausted. His brain feels like it's on fire and he can barely feel his fingers.

He's started to shiver and when he looks into the shattered mirror shards, he finds his eyes are back to blue and his skin is shockingly pale.

He swallows.

Tommy is a Huntsman Spider.

If he's not unconscious, then he can still keep going.

For Ranboo. For Tubbo.

So as Tommy methodically checks the guns of bullets, keeping his eyes on the awake but dazed expressions of his friends, he starts to talk.

Chapter End Notes

And that's why Foolish wasn't answering Sam and Ponk's calls :)

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Hmmm, lore :)

TW// major character death, mention of death, mention of torture, blood, graphic depictions of injury, mentions of past child abuse, mention of child murder, mention of past brainwashing, very brief hint to animal cruelty (skip the section where Dream talks about a cat, it's just a paragraph), weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy talks.

He talks about the things he has never spoken about before because his friends nearly died, they still might if Life doesn't take hold.

He talks about missions and training and growing up in the Room, about ballet lessons and torture sessions and too big guns in too small hands.

He mentions the boy with the wings, the first time he ever killed someone at age five, the whole process of the graduation ceremony.

"George fucking hates driving," Tommy says to the quiet room. "Even Dream doesn't know why. He just does. It's a weird fucking quirk of his. I remember when he had to teach me to drive on a mission because he wouldn't do it."

His fingers methodically check the weapon in his hand. Over and over and over again.

"Sapnap gives the best hugs and Dream is a right bitch but they're my brothers, you know? I love them. I think. I don't really get love but if something happened to them, I think I would tear the world to pieces."

Tommy doesn't know how long he talks until his eyes start to droop.

The exhaustion clouds his vision, makes his body ache and Tommy finds himself leaning further and further back against the wall.

"I hate torture," he whispers, eyes closed. "It hurts so bad and we weren't allowed to break so I didn't. But there's always a second where you think you won't withstand it. The Room taught us that so long as the mind keeps pushing, the body can handle anything."

He's been burnt, cut, whipped, stabbed, shot. All of it hurt and yet he keep getting back up.

"I'm sorry," Tommy breathes. "I'm sorry I couldn't stop you from my fate."

Neither of them respond as their eyes have closed. Tommy can see the pulse in their necks and when the next wave of unconsciousness hits him, he doesn't fight it.

With his hand on the gun, Tommy passes out.

The Asset doesn't care about people.

The Asset simply has a job to do.

So he leaves the people behind and runs to where the Helicarriers are rising into the sky.

A group of S.H.I.E.L.D. agents call out to him, demanding he explain himself.

The Asset doesn't hesitate to shoot them.

(A part of him fights, thinking back to the way that man spoke to him, held him, kissed him.)

The Asset shakes his head, approaches an aircraft.

"Take the left, get into the sky. Help the Captain in any way we-" The man looks straight at the Asset.

(Iskall stares at the man that wiped out his team, nearly killed him and freezes.)

"Baba Yaga," the man whispers and the Asset lifts his gun and shoots.

Three people hit the floor, five people dive away. The Asset doesn't bother with them. He instead climbs into the aircraft and looks up at the Helicarrier, slowly rising into the sky.

Grian has two of the keycards used to shut the Helicarriers down after flying up and grabbing Puffy's.

He doesn't know where Dream is. Neither does she.

And in trying to find Dream, he instead finds Mumbo on the landing pad. He's panting, surrounded by screaming agents and Grian doesn't want to do this.

"You're my friend," he calls. "Remember? You were always there when I needed you. Mumbo, c'mon, don't choose them."

Not over Grian.

Mumbo pauses, turns but there is no warmth in his eyes. Just a strange mania. “The Department is freedom!”

“No, it’s about control!” Grian shouts, his wings ripping out of his back. “They’re not your friends, your family! They’re monsters!”

“Oh, Grian, aren’t we all? How many people have we let die for the greater good? How many bodies is S.H.I.E.L.D. covering up?”

Grian narrows his eyes. “They tortured and murdered children! Children, Mumbo! The Red Room took trafficked kids, brainwashed them and turned them into killers!”

Mumbo grins at him. “And think about how many wars they’ve prevented? Think how many countries we could have pushed into peace through them?”

Something inside Grian crumbles to dust.

He’s an Avian.

Not many of them are around but the ones that do exist are fuelled by instincts.

Children are nestlings, something to be cared for in the safety of a nest.

They’re not supposed to be raised like that, learning pain quicker than they can learn love.

“What happened to you?” Grian whispers.

“This has always been me,” Mumbo replies. “You just didn’t want to see it.”

With that they both raise their weapons at the same time.

(Grian is quicker. Always has been.

A bullet rips through his shoulder, near his heart as his bullet tears through Mumbo’s neck.

He catches him as he falls, blood pooling at his feet.

“I’m sorry,” Grian whispers, tears in his eyes. “I’m- why couldn’t you just walk away? Why?”

Mumbo grins bloody teeth at him as the light leaves his eyes.

Grian presses their foreheads together, wings wrapped around them.

He spends a second to sob, to think of the memories shared. All of them are now clouded with the knowledge Mumbo was never on his side.

But he is- was his friend.

Because Mumbo was the better shot. Always has been.

And yet Grian isn't dead.

Grian swallows, stands. Mumbo and his blood stain his shirt, tears stain his cheeks. He wipes at his face, checks that he has the keycards and then runs until his wings catch the air.

He rises into the sky, parrot wings on full display before diving for the first Helicarrier.)

Puffy isn't shocked when she's surrounded by agents. Xisuma and False stand in front of her with Schlatt grinning at her as he waltzes in.

"I heard about Foolish," he says and she grits her teeth. "Such a shame."

She keeps her eyes on where Drista is still unconscious. Whatever is running through her veins, is keeping her out for longer.

"I'll kill you for that," she says, calmly.

He laughs. "Your little plan will fail, Puffy. The Department isn't so easy to defeat with a passionate speech."

Puffy tilts her head. "You thought my speech was passionate. Thank you!"

He rolls his eyes at her sarcasm. "Let's do this the easy way," he says. "Call off your son--"

"My son," she interrupts. "Is free from the hell the Red Room made him endure. He can do what he damn well pleases."

"He can't protect you, Puffy."

She laughs. "What makes you think I need protecting?"

Xisuma raises his arm and Puffy calls upon her power. He starts to choke as False lunges for her. Puffy smacks the gun from her hand, grabs her arm and flips her, pressing her boot to her neck

Xisuma stands only for bedrock to suddenly spawn around him, encasing him.

Drista opens her eyes, looks at Puffy. "What's happening?"

Schlatt steps forward and twenty forks appear in front of him, hovering in the air.

"Do you want to tell her or should I?" Puffy asks just as the door slams open.

They all turn to find Gemini and Scar standing there, guns raised, followed by Scott Smajor.

"Director," Puffy greets and Scott rolls his eyes.

"I take one vacation in my career and everything falls apart." He looks at Schlatt before turning to Gemini and Scar. "Gem, keep watch on the others. Scar, upload all the files you've

been collecting.”

“Traitor,” Xisuma snarls.

Scar rolls his eyes. “I never worked for you. Why did you think I wanted to know all about the Department? Unlike you, I’m not fond of child murder.”

“You knew,” False breathes at Scott and he grins at her. “This entire time, you knew the Department was infiltrating S.H.I.E.L.D..”

“I had to be sure,” he says. “I had to wait until I had proof, and then names. I’ve been aware of this for awhile but I knew it would be difficult to covertly take you all out.”

“You waited for us to all collectively admit which side we were on,” Xisuma says and Scott laughs.

“Of course. If you want to stay ahead of me, Xisuma, you need to keep both eyes open.”

The minute he steps foot on the catwalk, he pauses. Below him, it’s all glass and he can see the Triskelion building and the Potomac River. He sees Grian fly down and knows the other keycards are in place. It’s all down to him.

Not that any of that is holding his attention like the person before him, blocking him from where the keycard needs to go.

George, in his Winter Soldier combat gear, only this time without the mask, goggles or hood.

Dream steps closer. “People are going to die, George,” he says, thinking of Foolish.

All he can see is Foolish’s body.

Now, he’s seen his brother die twice. Once by his hand, the other by George’s. Unlike his fake memories, George really did kill him.

“I can’t let that happen,” he continues and George doesn’t even twitch.

He just stares at Dream, blankly.

There’s no hint of recognition there, no hint of warmth.

All Huntsman Spider.

“Please don’t make me do this,” Dream whispers, voice hoarse with emotion.

George just blinks at him.

So Dream steels himself.

He can't kill him. He could never kill him. But Dream has to stop it and if that means hurting George-

Well. George is a Huntsman Spider as much as Dream is.

They can both take a punch.

Dream swallows, straightens. Like a mirror, George also straightens, seeing the threat in Dream.

Without pause, Dream rushes forward.

Dream doesn't hold back. Even if he's not actively trying to kill George, he's not going easy.

Foolish is dead. So many others are and more will follow if Dream can't stop this.

And he will.

He will end this. Here and now.

He's not letting the Department control him anymore. Not again. Never again.

So he punches and kicks, accepting the way George dodges and tries to hit back. Dream is quick to snap the gun from George's hand and throw it. George simply pulls out a knife.

Dream slides back, eyes on the blade. He kicks at his knee, catching his wrist and tugging him. George tries to flip him but Dream won't let it end like this. He snaps the knife from his hand, headbutts him.

George rears back and there's a flicker in his eyes.

One of anger.

Dream grins.

"Your name is George," he starts, laughing as George tackles him. He catches his fist, flips them so he's on top. He has a plan, one stored in his jacket pocket. "You choose it when we were given covers. It's why you have an English accent because you took the hating Americans thing from the Russians a little too far."

George knees him, scrabbles away. Dream groans, flips up to avoid the kick to the face.

George doesn't let him get close to the keycard dock. He hooks a leg around his knees, tugging him forward so he can flip him over his shoulder.

"You love cats," Dream continues, hissing at the punch to his ribs and smacks his elbow up to smash into George's face. His nose starts to bleed. Dream spins himself, grabs George and throws him to the ground. "I remember that training exercise with cats, our supposed month off. You still mourned Liho. Even after all of these years."

He shakes off the pain in his ribs and hobbles to the dock.

George slams his head into the metal, swings him around, to punch him in the jaw, in the stomach.

Dream brings his knee up, catches George's fist and pulls him tight so his back is pressed against his chest.

"You keep that blank expression because you do care. You care about me. You care about Sapnap. You care about Tommy." He breathes into his ear, holding him even as he struggles. He fiddles with his pocket. "I care about you, too, Georgie. Remember those rings I got us for Christmas? You're it for me, George. Sap and Tommy are my brothers but I love you."

He holds up the ring, before sliding it onto his thumb.

That gets George to still.

In fact, he freezes in his arms.

Dream holds his breath.

He dares himself to believe that he's finally got through to him.

And then the guns on the side of the ship turn.

The Helicarriers are being activated.

Dream has run out of time.

He takes George and flips him over the barrier, over the catwalk, down onto the glass floor below.

He turns to the control panel, the keycard dock. He opens it, takes the card from his cargo trouser pocket.

That's when he feels it.

The pain in his stomach and then in his chest. He looks down as blood pours from the open wounds the bullets rip into him.

He collapses forward and then catches himself. He takes the keycard out, places his own in.

The guns on the side of the Helicarrier freeze before turning, aiming at each other.

Dream presses his hand against his stomach. He doesn't know if George hit anything vital but he has to assume yes.

The guns fire.

The Helicarriers take the impact, getting shot to pieces.

It tilts and Dream is thrown over the railing. His head smacks against the glass and everything goes blurry and dark before he pushes it away, fights through it.

When he looks up George is staring at him from where a metal beam holds him in place.

Dream crawls over and pulls at the beam until George can shuffle out. He ends up on his knees, blinking at Dream.

Everything hurts and blood drips from his mouth as he says, "You know me."

"No, I don't!" George screams, smashing a fist into Dream's face.

He tumbles back. "George," he hisses. "You've known me since I started training."

George once again lunges forward and hits him. "Shut up!" He yells.

Dream goes sprawling. They both stand on unsteady legs as the Helicarrier shifts beneath them.

"I'm not going to fight you," Dream breathes, exhausted and aching. "You're my partner."

George pauses before tackling him.

Dream's head smacks against the glass and everything goes black before he blinks up to see George staring at him, blood dripping from his nose.

"You're my mission," he spits and then starts to punch him.

One after the other, repeating the words like a mantra. Dream accepts the hits, feeling his cheekbone break.

George pulls back and Dream smiles at him, half-delirious from blood loss and pain. "Then finish it," Dream breathes. "'Cause I'm with you till the end of the line."

The same message etched into their rings.

George freezes, eyes going wide. Dream stares up at him, waiting, accepting.

Death is common in their business.

He always expected it to come from a training exercise or a mission.

He never thought it would be George.

He's glad it's George.

To die by George's hand would be a good death, a sweet one.

Pained, accepting green eyes meet wounded, panicked brown eyes.

"Dream?" George whispers and Dream smiles wider, closes his eyes.

“I love you,” he says and the Helicarrier jerks to the side, a metal beam smacking into the glass and shattering it.

Dream falls.

Down into the river below, along with most of the Helicarrier.

The cold water hits him and steals his breath.

Darkness floods his vision.

Dream doesn’t fight it.

He relaxes into it, comforted by it.

His last thought is of George’s heartbroken face and wondering how Puffy will cope with both of her sons dying in the same day by the same man.

Phil doesn’t understand what he’s seeing.

One minute, the Helicarriers are rising from the sky and Bad is grinning.

The next, they’re turning against each other and plummeting to the ground.

“No,” Ant breathes. “How-?”

“Schlatt has failed.” Bad says, calmly. “Now onto phase two.”

They all turn to leave.

“Punz,” Purpled whispers, desperately. Punz doesn’t even turn, he just keeps walking.

“Don’t worry, Purpled. We’ll be seeing each other soon.” Bad says and Phil can only watch as they all walk away.

In the end, after a solid minute of staring, Phil makes his way towards the Triskelion, followed by the others.

Tommy doesn’t know what awakens him but it’s enough for him to slam upright, grab his gun and aim it forward as he rests on one knee. Blinking the sleep from his eyes, he meets the blue gaze of a woman standing there.

Her pink hair is what catches his attention and for a split second, he thinks it’s Niki looking at him.

But it’s not.

“Who the fuck are you?” He spits, finger hovering over the trigger.

“Lizzie,” she says, in English with a British accent. Then unfurls her hand to reveal his ring sitting there. “You’re Theseus, aren’t you? Dan’s son? You lost this.”

His ring. The one Dream gave him.

And Lizzie, the woman that Dan said is the reason for Tommy being found after Dan got him out of Russia.

“Lizzie?” Tommy says, looking at her properly, eyes flicking between her and the ring. “As in-“

He looks to Ranboo’s sprawled body, noting the steady rise and fall of his chest.

“Lethe,” Lizzie breathes.

“Ranboo,” Tommy corrects, firmly. “His name is Ranboo. Just like I’m Tommy. I’m not theirs. Not anymore.”

“They killed him,” Lizzie says, stepping forward but Tommy is too jumpy. He snaps his head around, shifting the gun and she freezes. “He’s my son-“

“And you’ve been sent by them,” Tommy accuses. “I don’t give a shit who you are. If someone tries to take them from me, I’m killing them.”

“Tommy,” she says, the Black Widow burning in his eyes. “They killed my son. And I don’t know how you did it - I have a theory - but he’s alive and that means I’m in your debt.”

“I thought nothing was more important than a mission?” He mocks.

“There’s a reason they made all of the younger agents sterile,” she says, eyes on Ranboo. “A parent’s child will always be more important than a mission.”

There’s no lie there and whilst Tommy doesn’t trust her explicitly, he has no reason to believe this is a ploy.

Tommy relaxes back. He still holds the gun but there’s no active threat in front of him.

“What the fuck is happening?” He asks, back pressed against the wall. “Why bring us here only to kill two of us who could very easily become Huntsman Spiders?”

Lizzie moves to sit in front of him, holding out her hand. Tommy darts forward and grabs his ring, places back over his thumb. “I thought you’d ask how I got in here.”

He blinks at her. “That too I guess.”

She laughs. “I control shadows,” she tells him. “I can travel to anywhere I want, see everything I want.”

“That’s how you knew where I was, back when Dan tried to hide me,” Tommy says and she flinches.

“Tommy-“ She says and he wants to push, wants to shout.

She’s the entire reason he was never free.

But as he looks at Ranboo, as he is still reeling from the knowledge he died, he understands her.

To save Ranboo, to save Tubbo, Tommy will gladly experience the Room again.

“I’m over it.” He says, smiling at her. “As for the shadows: all of the recon missions were you. We didn’t have to wait months in advance because you could tell us on the day.”

“I was the Black Widow for a long time,” she says, looking like she wants to say more on the topic of Tommy being here because of her before her eyes once again flick to Ranboo’s chest. “I even had to fight my own daughter, Nikita.”

“Niki,” Tommy corrects and smiles when she darts a glance to him. “You never looked into her?”

She holds out a hand to show the power dampener locked tight around her wrist. So tight, she’d have to cut her whole hand off to remove it.

“They wiped both of them when Le- Ranboo went missing in Siberia, after Niki blew up the old facility.” She taps at the power dampener. “This means I can only shadow-travel when they allow me to.”

“That sucks,” Tommy says, remembering the way he was never allowed to use his abilities without a Handler agreeing to it.

“As for the situation here,” she says. “There is Billiam and there is the thing controlling him. Billiam wants three Huntsman Spiders, trained and ready to bring about a better Red Room. The Egg wants the end of the world.”

Tommy blinks, startled. “What?”

“Billiam wanted all of the agents back. He wanted to restart the Red Room but in his image.” She gestures around her. “Then a young recruit appeared and next thing we know, his eyes are red and he’s hunting the agents down for a difference reason.”

“Like what? What was he looking for you?”

Lizzie smiles, a small, sad smile. “You,” she breathes. “He was looking for you.”

Tommy tenses. “What?”

“You brought my son back to life,” she says, quietly. “You killed the woman. You killed a God.”

“And now he wants that power for himself,” Tommy whispers and Lizzie nods.

“All of the recon I’ve done, all of the government officials the Department has corrupted, all of the pockets their hands are in: none of it matters if he can remake the world.”

Tommy sits there, mind racing.

Billiam wants to destroy the world.

Originally, he was going to use Ranboo and Tommy as agents, with Tubbo as an added bonus. But that changed when his eyes turned red.

He no longer cares about world domination. Why would he when he’s planning for it to end?

Twenty-eight to one, bred and trained to be the best. They graduated, told they would help bring about the end of the world.

Tommy killed the woman. He thought this was over.

How naive of him to be filled with hope.

He should’ve listened to his training.

“You know them all?” He asks. She nods, eyes focused on the steady rise and fall of Ranboo’s chest.

“I’ve met most of them, and know people who know how to access them.” She finally looks up. “Why?”

“If I can get out of here, I want their names.” He says it firmly, Huntsman flickering over his features.

“Tommy-“

“I want them all,” he hisses and her eyes widen, the Black Widow turning her eyes dark.

“They trained us to hunt and kill. I think it’s time to show them just how proud they should be of our skills.”

He refuses to let the world end.

And if the world isn’t ending, the Department is too powerful to remain hidden.

They need to be stopped.

They need to be ended.

He has to be sure this time.

He looks to the ring on his thumb. He will fight for Tubbo and Ranboo, but also for his brothers, for all the other agents.

Alyssa's words come to mind about how he can stop it, how he can save them.

A plan starts to form in his mind

"There's a lot more of them than us," she warns and he laughs.

"We're agents of the Red Room, when has that ever stopped us?"

Lizzie looks at him and then asks, "What do you need?"

"To get off this fucking thing," he replies. "You said he expected us to come, right? That means he has gear for us. I need it all. And Niki."

"Tommy-"

"Look," he interrupts. "I'm getting out of here with or without you."

He shifts the gun in his hand, points it straight at her and meets her gaze.

There is no warmth there, no Tommy.

Just Huntsman Spider.

"Don't make me kill you before your kids can ever know your name."

She straightens and for a second, it's not Lizzie staring at Tommy.

It's a Huntsman Spider against a Black Widow.

He's seen fights like these before, knows it truly is luck that comes down to who's surviving.

"You better know what you're doing," she says, standing before stepping into Tommy's shadow against the floor and disappearing.

Chapter End Notes

Tommy really is accepting his inner Huntsman Spider :)

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

Heyyyyyyy,,, so, the reason this has taken nearly a month is because my friend got me involved in another fandom (I binged four seasons in a week), I forgot I had two midterm exams, I've been searching for an apartment and life has been stressful. But I'm here now!

TW// major character death, mentions of suicide, brief mention of alcoholism, brief mention of child death, brainwashing, past child abuse, injury, blood, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When Lizzie first returns, she drops three combat uniforms onto the wooden floor in front of Tommy before disappearing again. Tommy doesn't hesitate to look them over before finding his own.

Tubbo's is lighter, wrists open allowing him to use his stingers. His wings can fit through the cut holes at the back and the normal Huntsman mask has been altered to look more like Sam's mask, more like a gas mask.

Ranboo's is a little heavier, with reflective glass goggles, clearly designed so he can watch his opponents without them realising.

Tommy's is like his usual Huntsman gear and he's quick to slip into it.

Lizzie returns a second time, this time with weaponry before disappearing again. Tommy sorts through the assorted weapons, finding a couple of knives he's comfortable using and a rifle.

When she returns, it's with Niki.

Niki takes one look at what Tommy is wearing, at the boys behind him before she's whirling on Lizzie.

"She's your mother," Tommy shouts in Russian and Niki freezes.

"What?" She hisses.

"Ranboo's your brother," Tommy continues. "We also need her before you try and kill her."

Niki turns to him and he smiles at her, somewhat awkwardly. “How do you know this?”

“I met my dad,” he says, casually, as if it’s not important when it really is. “Learnt a couple things, which you can learn if you don’t gouge her fucking eyes out. Please. Eye goo is so gross to wash off.”

Niki let’s him explain and Tommy finds she’s also wearing a different Black Widow combat gear, one that Billiam gave her. It’s white, with a light green vest thrown over it.

She’s quiet through all of it, nodding at some parts, humming at the others. She only speaks to tell him offhandedly the quarantine from Sqaishey’s ability is over now.

When he’s finished, she asks, “So what’s your plan?”

“Awaken the others,” he replies. “According to Alyssa, Dream’s normal friend - I know, it’s shocking that the bastard has them - I have the magic touch when it comes to fighting this fucking egg thing. If that doesn’t work? Get the fuck out of here as quickly as possible.”

Niki’s fingers still on the braid she’s weaving into her hair. “What about those two? They don’t know how to-“

“They both have Huntsman blood,” he says, both of them ignoring the way Lizzie keeps looking between Ranboo and Niki, something soft and vulnerable in her eyes. “And Ranboo fought me. We’re all getting out of here.”

“And you then want to go on a killing spree?” She asks and Tommy snorts.

“Lizzie has given me the names but yes. I do. They deserve to fucking pay.”

Niki ties the braid and then looks at him, really looks at him. He looks back, open with no guard, no walls hiding what he’s thinking.

He’s ending this.

They created him to kill a God and he did. Just the wrong one.

“They’re going to fight back,” she says and he rolls his eyes.

“Scared, Black Widow?” He goads and he watches the shift in her posture, the way her eyes darken.

“Never, Huntsman Spider.”

His memory flickers at the edges. Bursts of colour and light and faces. Names that come and go before he can grab them.

The Asset warring against himself.

The mission is-

The mission is falling into the river, eyes closed with a grin on his face.

The mission's name is Dream.

Even if he keeps forgetting it, over and over again.

Dream.

Dream hits the water and he-

The Asset-

George. His name is George.

George let's himself drop down as the Helicarrier breaks apart, debris raining down.

The water is cold, momentarily stealing his breath but he pushes through his own discomfort.

The mission-

Dream needs him.

The Asset-

George shot him. Twice. Stomach and chest. Even with his mind wiped, he didn't headshot him, even when he could.

George doesn't miss.

And yet he didn't kill him.

George takes a breath of air before diving down.

He hooks an arm around Dream and pulls. He stumbles when his feet hit the ground and he ends up tugging him by his hand onto dry land.

George looks at Dream, at his still chest.

Something breaks inside him.

He's dropping beside him before he can blink, fingers shaking as they press to the side of his neck. A small pulse but a pulse nonetheless.

"Don't you dare die on me," he hisses and something sounds familiar about those words as he starts chest compressions. "You're not dying without me."

Just as water passes Dream's lips as his heart starts to beat properly, George is thrown into a memory of a grimy-looking hotel and a bleeding out Dream.

His Dream, with his green eyes, so surprised to find that George cared for him-

Cares for him.

“Fuck,” he hisses and despite his now somewhat steady pulse, he’s still bleeding out (because of George, because of the Asset, because of the mission) and unconscious. “Fucking shit.”

He thinks Tommy would be proud of his use of language before he’s hit with the memories of blond hair and a young face.

That young face shifts as his memories of Sapnap swarm him.

“This is fucked,” he whispers to Dream’s unconscious body.

He’s also hit with the realisation that if Dream dies, George doesn’t know if he can kill himself. Is Eret’s control still in effect? Will Dream go somewhere George can’t follow?

He looks at the ring on his thumb and feels like his brain is splitting apart with memories and conditioning and plans on how to fix this.

Can he fix this?

George looks at Dream and part of him, the Asset part of him still awake in his head, is telling him to cut and run. Dream- his mission is unconscious and death will be slow but he won’t feel any discomfort, any pain.

No one knows George is here apart from Puffy. Foolish is dead and Drista was still unconscious when he left.

Puffy couldn’t find her son when he was taken from her, she won’t be able to find him.

Tommy will though. So will Sapnap.

He doesn’t doubt they will hunt him like their collective namesake and he’d rather not be webbed by his friends, his brothers. He’d rather they’d not kill him either.

He wonders if they would if Dream died because of him.

Sapnap’s always been the angry one.

And Tommy’s always been a little too much like George.

He has Sapnap’s fire and Dream’s intelligence but George’s coldness, his calculating nature.

Tommy, at age sixteen, took on the Red Room and blew it to pieces. A year later, he took on a God and won, bringing the entire organisation down.

George knows that if Tommy were to try and take the Department on, he’s placing his bets on the boy.

George looks at Dream and the thought of leaving makes him want to be sick.

“Partners,” he whispers and looks up at the still standing Triskelion, even as some of it crumbles. He knows what he has to do.

He just hopes he can get Dream there with a beating heart before Puffy can kill him.

“What are you doing?” Drista asks Scar, green eyes still hazy from the drugs in her system. Puffy stands beside her daughter, running her hand through blonde hair.

They haven’t mentioned Foolish. Drista hasn’t asked but there’s an understanding in those dazed eyes, an awareness that is startling.

Puffy thought she lost her son, back when she was in hospital. There was no funeral, no mourning because her son wasn’t dead, he was taken.

Now, she will have to plan a funeral because her son is dead, not taken. Her daughter gained a brother and then lost one.

“He’s uploading all of S.H.I.E.L.D.’s files to the Internet,” Xisuma breathes from where he’s handcuffed to a chair, sitting on the floor, bedrock gone with a click of Drista’s fingers.

Scott scoffs. “The Department’s, too.”

“Are you ready for the world to see you as you really are?” Schlatt hisses. The forks hovering in front of him do not waver. Scar rolls his eyes, fingers not pausing on Schlatt’s desk.

“Are you?” Scar mutters.

“This will ruin you,” False says, handcuffed on the other side of Xisuma, Gemini staring her down and Scott shrugs.

“Maybe, maybe not. Either way, the world will know what the Department is doing.”

“Why do all of this?” Schlatt asks, red eyes burning. “The Department can offer-“

“Oh, they did.” Scott interrupts, blue hair and purple eyes somehow looking dangerous when he pulls his lips into a vicious grin. “After a Huntsman Spider dropped video evidence on my door, a couple of agents came back for it.”

“The Department doesn’t fail,” Xisuma hisses and Scott scoffs.

“Remind me, Xisuma, which one of us is currently handcuffed to a chair?”

“Sir,” Scar says, stopping Xisuma from retorting. “It’s all uploaded. I just need your retinal scan.”

Scott immediately steps up and Puffy is surprised at how easy it is to dismantle an entire organisation through sheer will alone. The Department no longer has secrets and they can’t hide in the shadows anymore.

Within a minute, Scott's retinal scan goes through and Scar stares at his screen with wide eyes.

Gemini pulls out her phone and laughs. "Look," she says, tilting the phone so that Xisuma and False can see whatever's displayed. "It's trending on Twitter."

Xisuma shuts his eyes while False goes pale.

Puffy opens her mouth to speak-

(It can feel the shift.

The minute the host is no longer useful.

It pulls itself away, focusing on the three other hosts, only one now burning with life, keeping it fed.

It would get rid of the other two but one is it's getaway plan and the other is needed for the young God.

There's a brief moment of resistance from it's host and then the connection is cut short.)

-but shuts it the minute Schlatt's eyes roll into the back of his head and he collapses.

Drista drops the forks as Puffy lunges forward. Despite everything that's happened, this is still her brother, her big brother.

"Schlatt?" She breathes, dropping to her knees beside his still body. She lifts a shaky hand to his neck, pressing fingers against the side of his neck.

No pulse.

In fact, he's freezing, as if he's been dead for longer than a second.

"Puffy?" Scott asks and she shakes her head, thoughts racing.

Her brother is dead. Again.

She doesn't really know what to feel. Ever since that day when Schlatt disappeared and returned, they've been distant. She knows why, knows he was hunting the Red Room to join it, knows that Corpse was in his head, fuelling his alcoholism.

And the man before her didn't act like the boy she grew up with.

It still hurts though. A part of her, splintering, breaking away.

Schlatt is dead. Foolish is dead. Dream is missing. Drista still doesn't know.

In that moment, her heart yearns for Niki by her side. She wants the woman to hold her, comfort her. She misses her so deeply it aches.

“Mom?” Drista whispers and she steels herself suddenly.

Puffy rises, swallows her emotions and walks back over to Drista, running a hand through her hair before looking at Scott. “He’s dead,” she says, bluntly.

Scott’s brow furrows. “How? What-“

Then there’s movement.

One of the Helicarriers slams into the side of the building. The floor beneath their feet shifts. Xisuma and False move as one, rising with handcuffs no longer attached to their wrists.

False slams into Gemini while Xisuma lunges for Scott.

A second later, Grian is flying into the room. He tackles Xisuma to the ground and Puffy grabs Drista as the entire building shudders.

So they stopped the Helicarriers, she thinks, before panic burns at her throat. She pulls at her probability ability, demanding that she and Drista survive whatever is happening.

It’s all a blur until a gunshot rings out.

She pushes Drista behind her as her eyes dart to the blood on Grian’s chest. Her heart pounds. His eyes are wide.

And then Xisuma collapses back, eyes blank, body still. Blood pools beneath him.

Puffy finally clocks the gun in Grian’s hand.

False screams, abandoning her scuffle with Gemini, who’s bleeding from her nose and the side of her head, to press at Xisuma’s chest.

“We’ve got to go,” Scar hisses, voice firm but eyes panicked as he takes in the scene.

Gemini reaches for False but she snarls at her, refusing to move.

The glass shatters and Puffy’s only thought is of her daughter: she will not lose another family member today. She can’t.

She grabs her daughter and pulls her from the room, down flights of shuddering stairs and out onto stable pavement.

“Well,” Scott pants beside her as the building crumbles. “I don’t think my insurance is going to pay for this type of damage.”

Gemini laughs and Scar snorts. Grian is oddly quiet.

“Mumbo is dead,” he says, after a moment of staring. “I can’t find Iskall or his team. Xisuma is dead. Ren, Cleo and Doc are in Russia. False is probably going to be buried under the rubble.”

“Do you know where Dream is?” She asks and he shakes his head.

“I’m guessing the last Helicarrier. It worked but-“

They both look to the falling aircrafts.

Is Dream on one? Did he get to the ground safely?

She chokes on a sob crawling up her throat. She has to be strong. For Drista.

Drista, who might lose both her brothers and uncle today.

She turns to the girl, opens her arms when she sees tears forming in those green eyes. She steps forward, face pressed against Puffy’s neck as she whispers, “He’s dead, isn’t he? Foolish.”

“I’m so sorry,” Puffy breathes and holds her daughter as she breaks.

Puffy doesn’t know how long she holds her as the Triskellion is reduced to half a building and half rubble. She simply tightens her grip on her daughter and rocks them back and forth, muttering soothing words.

In all honesty, Foolish’s death hasn’t hit her yet.

There’s an inescapable pain burning at her but the stress is keeping the weight of it away. She knows when they’re safe she will shatter.

But for now, her priority is Drista.

She’s so distracted with holding her that she doesn’t notice the approaching group until her name is called.

Turning her head, she’s met with Phil.

Well, a freshly scarred Phil. His wings have been clipped, new feathers growing in. There’s a scar across his eye and she wonders if he’s gone blind in it.

There’s also the entourage of crows behind him, flying down to the ground.

“Phil,” she greets, eyeing up Wilbur’s new facial scars and Techno’s lost look, Jack’s calculating stare, Charlie’s worried gaze and Purpled’s blank eyes. “What happened?”

He snorts. “I could ask you the same thing.”

“Stopped three Helicarriers designed to kill millions of people. Leaked the Department’s secrets. Foolish died. Dream is missing.” She says, as lightly as possible. She doesn’t mention that George was the one to pull the trigger. “You?”

“Got arrested. Got tortured. Quackity has either disappeared or is dead. Tommy helped us escape. Jack came back from the dead through spite. Punz joined Bad, Ant and Skeppy with

their fucking creepy red eyes. Tommy went missing, along with Tubbo, Ranboo and Niki. We're guessing Russia." He replies. He pauses and adds, "Oh! The Syndicate rebranded. We no longer give a shit about hiding our identities and the Pogtopia gang are all dead."

Scott laughs. They both turn to him. "That's a lot," he says and Phil shrugs.

"It's been a shit couple of week," he agrees, looking back at Puffy. "Do you know where the kids are?"

She shakes her head. "I've been dealing with all of this." Then she nods her head towards Scott. "Director of S.H.I.E.L.D.. Scott Smajor."

Phil grins. "Nice to meet you. I'm Phil. You can call me Odin if you want."

"The Norse God of War, Wisdom and Death?" Scott says, straightening and Phil's grin widens. Wilbur cracks a small smile but there's something different about him other than his scars.

His eyes are empty and she remembers what Dream said before their car was flipped.

"I'm sorry for your loss," she says, holding Drista tighter. "Fundy was a good man."

Wilbur swallows, nods. "Thank you. Sorry for yours." Then he rolls his shoulders and his eyes burn. "Don't worry, Tommy dealt with my revenge and considering the government's security organisation is currently getting destroyed, I'm feeling better."

"Next is the Department," Techno adds, voice a little too rough, eyes a little too faraway. "Then possibly the government."

Jack cracks his knuckles. "Righting wrongs really does feel good, doesn't it?"

Scott narrows his eyes. "You said Syndicate, yes?" He says to Phil, eyes darting to where Grian is shuffling, eyes downcast. "The biggest crime organisation--"

"I'm just a businessman, mate," Phil says with a smirk. "Look. I don't have a problem with you, or S.H.I.E.L.D.. Even if you sent Grian to spy on us. If you do decide to become a problem, know that I'm done playing nice. I will destroy everything you love with a smile."

Scott's eyebrows raise as he reels back. Both Scar and Gemini shift, sidling closer as if finally realising Phil is very much a threat.

"Grian," Phil says, voice notably softer. "Are you okay?"

Grian makes a low, whining trill and Phil is moving before Puffy can blink. Large, black wings envelop Grian as the man clings to Phil, who's letting out soothing chirps back.

"Dad's gone bird brain," Wilbur mutters and Techno snorts. Charlie laughs, leaning forward.

"Does he always--"

“Yes,” both men reply at the same time. Even Purpled cracks a grin.

Puffy looks at them, and knows they’ve changed. They all have.

They will return to L’Manberg as very different people. They’ve lost more than they’ve gained and Puffy fears what’s more to follow.

Because Phil has fought two governments before for his sons and Tommy is missing.

And when the dust clears, Puffy will have to come to terms with the fact her son’s boyfriend killed her other son.

Half of the Heroes are gone and Foolish and Fundy are dead. The Villains won’t be the same, there’s a darkness there now, one that makes Puffy think of the harsh chill of winter.

There will be questions after this. The world will want to know more and the Department won’t take this well. They will be hunted unless the Department is stopped.

Standing on the razors edge, Puffy squeezes her daughter and drops her face into her blonde hair.

For now, she is content to hold Drista.

She can deal with the world at a later date.

George doesn’t expect to see all of them there.

They’re clearly surprised to see him. Especially when he drops Dream at their feet, like a cat bringing home a dead bird.

“He’s alive,” he says, voice hoarse and broken and so, so vulnerable. His Russian accent clings to his words. He feels frayed at the edges, like he’s gone through training all over again. “Barely,” he adds, looking at his bloody gear and they’re all moving at once.

George keeps himself silent and still as Puffy and a few of the S.H.I.E.L.D. agents grab Dream, shouting for medical assistance. Phil also steps closer, pushing someone behind him, someone with wings, but he’s watching George more than he’s watching Dream.

His wings curl tight to his back and George almost snorts. He almost forgot he’s a threat.

He killed Foolish.

He nearly killed Dream.

The thought makes his throat close and he wonders how open his face is, whether that’s what’s unnerving Phil.

George is emotionless, that's his whole thing. Unlike Sarnap's aggression and Dream's chatter, George is cold and clinical and closed off.

He remembers himself smiling more when he was free.

But even then, he was still distant. Always distant. Like a Huntsman Spider should be. Like a Russian assassin should be.

"George," Phil greets and Wilbur is watching him too, eyes a little too knowing, like he's waiting for George to break. "You look like shit, mate."

George doesn't stop his lips twitching. Wilbur straightens at the sight of it. "Thanks," he replies, drily, in that same broken voice. "It's the brainwashing."

"I'm guessing that means you're not doing good," Wilbur says and George snorts. God, he's tired. Wilbur practically flinches at the sound.

He must really look unhinged.

"Oh, yeah, I'm having a great time," he says, sarcastically. His whole body aches and he can't help but see the blood on his hands.

There's so much of it.

Tommy always mentions having a ledger of red but George has been doing this for a long time.

He was raised and trained to be an efficient killer and he is. He's the Red Room's best sniper, probably even Russia's best sniper. He's killed more people than he's had hot dinners and it's never phased him before, he's never had the time to truly acknowledge his actions.

It's safer that way, better if he doesn't see them as people but as missions, simpler.

He was trained to compartmentalise.

Yet now all he see is Dream's blood and memories of past missions come rushing back. Men, women, children: the Room weren't picky and he didn't have a choice.

Twenty-eight to one, to him.

Seventeen. George. Huntsman Spider. Baba Yaga. Winter Soldier.

He's had many names, many covers, many missions.

"I think he's about to pass out," Purpled's voice hits him and George looks up to find them all watching him, curiously, concernedly.

"I'm fine," he says.

Techno scoffs. "Yeah, sure. Very believable."

“I just need to know if Dream is going to be okay.” He makes sure to look at Phil when he says it and the man raises his eyebrows but his face softens. George finds himself relaxing.

Phil can sense death but if he’s not reacting badly then...

“It’s bad,” Phil says. “But I wouldn’t start picking out a coffin.”

George blinks at that before remembering Dream would get a funeral if he died. He’d get a coffin. He’d get a gravestone with his name on it, maybe even a few words. He’d get flowers.

It wouldn’t be a task given to one of the younger recruits to dig a messy pit. It wouldn’t be a slab of stone, unmarked.

There’s a groaning sound and the Triskelion starts to shift and move as the building begins to crumble from the force of the Helicarriers hitting it.

When they all turn instinctively to look, George moves.

By the time they turn back, George is no where to be seen.

It takes another hour before Ranboo and Tubbo stir.

They both twitch, halting the conversation between Lizzie and Niki about Niki’s bakery and then Tubbo’s eyes snap open while Ranboo lurches to the side.

“Easy,” Tommy breathes, hands reaching for them a little unsurely. “You’re alive. You’re in the Red Room in the fucking sky. Do you know who you are?”

“I could hear you,” Tubbo says, brown eyes wide. He doesn’t try to get up. “You were talking to us.”

Tommy blinks, his hands freeze in place. Neither Niki or Lizzie move.

“You saved me,” Ranboo whispers and Tommy can feel his hands start to shake.

“Yeah, yeah, I’m sorry about the pain-“

“I didn’t- did you feel pain?” Tubbo asks Ranboo. He slowly sits, Ranboo quickly following. “Because I didn’t.”

“No. It felt like being burnt at the start but then the best sleep I’ve ever had.”

Tommy can’t stop his stilted blinking. “What? You didn’t-“

He felt like he was getting pulled apart and put back together again. It was the worst pain he felt and he has survived torture, he has survived his training.

Tommy wished for death when he went through graduation.

Tubbo smiles at him. “It was a really good sleep.”

Tommy is honestly speechless. “How? Why-“

“You care about them,” Lizzie says, quietly. Both boys jerk back with half-hearted yells of surprise. “The woman never cared about any of us. We were soldiers, weapons. That power... it fits you.”

“Oh,” Tommy breathes.

“You did good,” Niki says, reaching over to grip his shoulder and Tommy can feel himself lean into it.

His friends are alive. They’re not safe but they’re alive.

“How awake are you?” Niki says to them, hand only squeezing Tommy’s shoulder tighter. It’s very reassuring. “Because we need to catch you up on a lot.”

Tommy snorts at that, handing them their gear.

Tubbo and Ranboo are children of the Room. They now have Life running through their veins. Tommy is going to go to war with the Department after finding a way to kill Billiam.

So much to say, so little time.

And yet, as he looks at his friends, he can’t help but breathe a sigh of relief. He saved them. They’re alive. It’s okay. It’s going to be okay. They’re going to be okay.

“So, what’s happening?” Tubbo asks and Tommy clears his throat.

“Well, funny story—“

Sapnap stands in L’Manberg and dread settles heavy in his stomach. Something is wrong. It makes him tense, Huntsman flickering at the edges of his vision.

“Sap?” Quackity asks but Sapnap looks to Melina and Sean. They share a glance as she tightens her hold on her daughter, and Sean slips in front of Grey protectively.

They saw the news of the Syndicate being arrested, of Solidarity’s article on Pandora’s Vault.

Karl frowns at his phone. “Puffy isn’t answering. Sam said Foolish isn’t either.”

“Are you sure they’re not in Russia?” Ethan asks Mark for the eighth time.

Mark rolls his eyes. “I told you. I looked there. The buildings are empty of people.”

“Check the orphanage,” Sean commands and Mark rolls his eyes again but his eyes are quick to flood black before he disappears into a cloud of darkness.

In a few seconds he's back. "Also empty."

"Check the Triskelion," Sapnap says. "Dream and Puffy should be there."

Dark disappears. A few seconds later, he returns, eyes wide. "Well. I found Phil. The Triskelion is rubble."

Sapnap blinks at him. "What?"

"It seems while we were dealing with the Beast Labs, Dream and Puffy have had fun blowing up a S.H.I.E.L.D. base."

Quackity immediately frowns, saying he was the one that wanted to burn a government's organisation to the ground. Ethan groans, still asking Dark to find the Department's hideout so he can kill those who killed Corpse.

Melina and Alexander look like they'd like to leave considering they followed them because Russia was no longer a safe option.

Sapnap really wants to sleep. Maybe this is all a dream. God, he really hopes it's all a dream.

He wonders if Karl can somehow take them all back to Christmas, when life was calmer, easier.

He sighs. Of course, it's impossible for him to have a break.

"Q," he says, gaining his attention. "Try and contact Phil. We need to know what's happening."

And then, Sapnap is going to cuddle his fiancés and sleep off whatever is happening and deal with his problems tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

The Final Fight is approaching :)

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

I'm back!!!

TW// minor character death, blood, violence, descriptions of being burnt alive, past and present brainwashing, mentions of child abuse, mention of child death, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy doesn't expect Tubbo and Ranboo to be so willing to follow him. They have every right to refuse, to hate him, especially when they are like him now.

A true Huntsman Spider.

He tells them they would be tired and unsteady for a while but neither show the same symptoms he did. According to Lizzie, it's because he cares about them.

Unlike the woman, Tommy wasn't trying to create soldiers, weapons, assets. He was just trying to save his friends.

They healed though and so part of what he knew is true. They will age slowly. They will heal quicker. They will be faster and stronger, with sharper reflexes.

Neither seem bothered.

So Tommy allows them to gear up, shows them how to hold and use a weapon. Ranboo picks it up extremely quickly - he can copy-cat, Tommy realises - and there is an ease to Tubbo's own movements.

It makes Tommy uneasy.

He has tried to keep them away from this life and yet Ranboo is back where he started and Tubbo is being pulled in. He tries to reason that Techno probably taught them - Tommy knows he trained them in self-defence - but he can't shake the idea that they were born for this, bred for it. Like he was.

"So you're going to tap them?" Niki asks and Tommy shrugs.

"If it doesn't immediately work, quick takedowns, no hesitation. If Lizzie is right, and Billiam wanted the fact I'm a fucking God, they will kill you to get to me."

Niki shared a look with him and he looked right back. There was an understanding there.

Protect Tubbo and Ranboo. Kill if necessary.

“What’s below us?” Ranboo asks, quietly and they all turn to him before looking to Lizzie.

She frowns at them. “The engines. Why?”

“I can-“ Ranboo shifts, the hood on his gear hiding his black and white hair. “I think someone’s down there.”

Tommy tenses immediately. “What?” He hisses.

“You do conveniently sense when something’s happening,” Tubbo mutters. “Like when Wil found out about Tommy at the casino. It made you ill.”

“You just feel something off?” Niki pushes and Ranboo nods, not meeting her eyes.

Tommy swings the rifle to his hands. “Change of plans. Lizzie, can you, like, fucking drop us in the engine room?”

Lizzie closes her eyes and then nods to holds out her hand. Niki grabs it - Lizzie’s eyes don’t open, but she does smile - and Tommy grabs Niki’s arm. Tubbo latches on to Tommy and then tugs Ranboo forward.

Lizzie pulls them and suddenly, Tommy’s vision is that of static. Greying edges and flashing whites and blacks.

And then they’re stumbling onto solid ground.

Tommy blinks, quickly orientating himself. They’re in a large domed area, standing on a catwalk. Below them, small engines spin, keeping the floating structure up in the sky.

It feels off though.

There are too few off them.

Tommy may be breathing open air but he doesn’t understand how those small things can keep them afloat.

“I don’t like this,” Niki whispers in Russian.

“Neither do I,” he replies, keeping his hand on his rifle.

“Uh,” Ranboo whispers, staring ahead at a door. “There.”

Niki and Tommy share a look and then walk forward. They stand on either side of the door. Tommy holds his arm out, keeping Tubbo and Ranboo behind him as Niki reaches for the handle.

Tommy shifts his stance, rifle raised. Niki waits. Tommy nods. She opens the door.

Tommy doesn't know what he's expecting but it's certainly not this.

A person is sat on the grates, hands cuffed to the ground below. They seem to be hooked up to a heart monitor and an IV.

Tommy doesn't know who the person is but Lizzie's gasp tells him that she does.

"Sky?" She breathes and the person looks up, eyes completely white.

"Shadow Lady," they whisper in a brittle voice with a grin. Tubbo tilts his head and Tommy realises they're speaking Russian so he quietly translates it. "Thank you."

Lizzie hesitates as she navigates the unstable ground below. "For what? I thought- they said you died."

Sky laughs. "I wish I did." The grin widens on their face. "But you're going to help now, aren't you? You're going to end this, end me."

Lizzie's face pales. "I wasn't- they didn't send me. I'm not--"

"I had to die," they say, as if trying to convince Lizzie to pull the trigger. "Billiam had a different use for me. Not that he knew that at the start. He, along with Eret, were thrilled with the Winter Soldier Program but after that mission in Odessa, I was shipped off to the Beast Labs. I was dying and they couldn't let me die."

"The formula shit," Tommy says, looking into those white eyes. "It boosted your abilities."

Sky nods. "Good, young spider. After that, Billiam placed me here. My power is uncontrollable. Even without the engines, I can keep us in the sky."

Tommy saw where this was going. He swallowed. "I can't," he says, in Russian. Sky's eyes burn into his. "I would, trust me, I would but I will take your ability and I'd rather not."

Sky smiles. "It's okay. I understand."

"If I do this," Lizzie breathes. "What do I tell the others?"

"That this is for the best. This is mercy."

"Will the structure fall?" Tommy asks. "The minute you're dead?"

Sky nods, tilts their head towards a control panel. "If you shut the back-up engines, we'd go into a controlled crash."

Tommy wonders if they'll drop in Siberia. It's a wasteland, and would do little damage. It's not as if anyone has told them whereabouts they are in the sky.

"Tubbo," Tommy says, as Lizzie produces a gun. "Can you shut the other engines down? Boo, make sure he doesn't slip and fall."

They both give him knowing looks before turning and doing as asked. Tommy has killed a lot of people. He's seen too many dead bodies to count.

Ranboo may have killed at age five, and both may be sons of a crime boss, but Tommy will not make them watch this. He will not give them the nightmares that follow something like this.

"Thank you," Sky breathes.

Lizzie smiles at them, tears in her eyes. "Rest easy," she says, and then pulls the trigger before lunging to catch them.

Sky crumples into Lizzie's arms. She lays them down onto the grate as Niki and Tommy leave the pair, joining the boys, before standing, wiping the tears from her eyes.

For a split, soaring second, the world exhales.

And then the engines shut off.

The floor beneath them lurches.

Tommy's wings immediately snap out and Tubbo's are fluttering and Ranboo has a hold on Niki.

The entire floating structure shudders and groans. Alarms start blaring and the emergency lights start flashing but Tommy knows they're going down.

The backup generators are trying to keep the structure afloat but without Sky, there's nothing truly holding them up.

His wings start to beat and his bird brain wants to fly, wants to touch those clouds, wants to breathe in the sharp air and just exist. The rest of his brain is aware that only two of their group has wings.

"Let's move to the landing pad," he says and wraps a gentle hand around Tubbo's wrist, pulling him away.

They climb the shaky stairs as the entire building shudders and shakes.

"The others?" Niki asks.

"They're trained," Lizzie replies. "They'll work out how to get out-"

Tommy sees the knife and moves before he can think about it. He ducks under the weapon, grabs the wrist and flips the person. He's kicking the other person's gun out of their hand before hitting the man with the butt of his rifle.

It's Toast and someone Tommy doesn't know but he's heard Lizzie describing the others. This is Stampy.

“Go,” he says to them, eyes fixed on the men before him. “We need a distraction and I can fly.”

Toast gets up and lunges for him. Tommy snaps his head back from the punch but he’s quick to kick his ribs and smash an elbow into his face.

He spots Stampy flipping up, just as he notices the others disappearing around the corner. Niki shoots him a look that clearly tells him if he doesn’t make it out of here alive, she will kill him.

Tommy eyes Stampy, muttering, “Didn’t you kill JFK?”

Stampy doesn’t dignify his question with a response. He’s ruthless, and Tommy is glad he never had to face the originals in training.

Despite that, Stampy is fighting because of orders.

Tommy is fighting for his family.

He lets himself be flipped before smashing Stampy’s head into the wall.

He groans as he crumbles and while both of them are bordering on unconsciousness, he’s not killed them or incapacitated them.

He doesn’t need to.

Alyssa said he can wake them up but as he reaches out with Life, nothing happens. He can’t feel anything to latch onto.

The structure shifts under his feet and he leaves them, running after his friends.

Plan Wake Them Up has failed. Now for Plan Knock Them Out-

He ends up nearly getting stabbed by Brooke.

He kicks Minx in the face.

Corpse throatpunches him into a coughing fit.

All the while, the structure starts to plummet to the ground. His ribs are bruised but not broken. His lip and knuckles are bleeding and he definitely has a black eye.

He stabs a man in the shoulder with his own knife. He’s thankful for his gear when Tina shoots him in the chest and the bullet is blocked.

He hears explosions as he races through the building. Fire burns hot through elevator doors and Tommy has a split second to think that jumping out of a window might not be the best idea but he has no choice.

His wings catch the air and he ends up touching down on the landing pad with a messy stumble, knees and ankles protesting.

He's scanning the area, looking for the others, hoping they got out when he catches a glimpse of pink hair sprinting at an aircraft.

Smoke billows from the structure and Tommy spots what has Niki's attention: an aircraft holding Billiam, surrounded by guards.

Niki grapples herself atop the roof of it, steadying herself by the engines. Tommy's stomach drops. He knows exactly what she's planning.

"Niki!" Tommy screams, rushing forward. "Don't do it!"

He can see Billiam realise, shouting orders that blur into the wind.

Niki hears him though. Their eyes meet as she pulls out her baton and snaps it, elongating it. Tommy can see the red charge running through it, signifying it's electrified.

"This has been fun!" Niki shouts in Russian and then shoves the baton into the engine.

She's immediately thrown back from the explosion and Tommy doesn't care about what happens to Billiam or the guards.

(The engine explodes as the aircraft lifts, fire billowing out, engulfing everyone inside with flames.

Billiam chokes on smoke and it draws away from his mind, his body. It already saved him from the gunshot to the chest from the Huntsman Spider's sniper rifle. But even it needs something to work with to latch onto a host.

Red pulls from Billiam as he's reduced to ash.)

He doesn't care, not when Niki is free falling.

Tommy doesn't stop sprinting even as he grabs a parachute container from the edge of the landing pad and proceeds to throw himself over the edge.

His wings curl tight as he plummets, sharp eyes locked onto pink hair.

Niki is awake enough that their eyes meet when Tommy's wings snap out to catch the air as he locks his legs and arms around her. He pulls the parachute over her as they spin from his wings and locks it before pulling the string.

Immediately they're being pulled up as the air is caught in the canopy.

“Tommy,” she whispers, eyes a little wide. Tommy grins back. She’s family. Tommy isn’t losing her, not like this.

And that’s when the pain hits.

Burning and hot and it feels like the graduation ceremony, like something is being ripped from him. It’s so sharp, he instinctively releases Niki.

She’s shouting something to him but blood rushes in his ears and he wonders why she looks so panicked.

She looks scared.

Black Widows don’t get scared.

So he tries to teach her, ignoring the tearing, pulling sensation in his back and finds his wings aren’t cooperating. He tries again: he can’t really explain flying, not when his wings are like any limb, something he can use without thought.

Nothing.

And that’s when he realises why.

When he looks, there are no red feathers to greet him because his wings aren’t there.

They’re gone.

And he’s plummeting to the ground.

Tommy meets Niki’s wild eyes and smiles before closing his own.

His death will be quick, final. His bones will shatter on impact and the shock will stop his heart if his neck doesn’t break. It’ll be over between blinks, between heartbeats.

He wanted to say goodbye to his brothers, to Phil and Techno and Wilbur but this is okay.

It’s oddly peaceful as he drops.

Almost like when he jumped off the edge in his Limbo.

Theseus, falling.

Theseus, dying, like all the heroes do, even if Tommy has never been a hero.

Twenty-eight to one Huntsman Spider.

Twenty-eight to a secret sleeper agent and a God-killer.

Twenty-eight to this.

Tommy hopes they’re okay without him, he hopes they move on.

He waits for the pain, calm and accepting.

He does not, however, crash and burn like Icarus.

Something smashes into the side of him. It's so sudden, it takes his breath away, briefly winding him. His eyes snap open, only to be met with a concerned blue one and a scar over one with a white film over it.

Then there's an awkward landing as black wings curl around them as they hit the ground, rolling on grass.

"Phil?" Tommy asks, voice small and confused.

"Hey, mate," he replies, scanning him for injuries. "You've been busy."

Tommy snorts and then groans. His mind starts to burn and his back aches. He rises on unsteady legs, balance skewed. There's a hole inside of him, and he's missing something integral to him.

"Where are your wings?" Phil asks and Tommy blinks at him, thrown. "I saw you drop from Niki and then--"

"I don't know," he says, rolling his shoulders. "I can't feel them. I- I don't know what's happening."

Tommy then notices where they are.

L'Manberg.

Specifically Las Nevadas. Because he is looking at the casino, now crumbling under the debris of the falling structure and Phil must've jumped from the fake Eiffel Tower to glide over and grab Tommy.

Around them, it's a mess.

He can spot Wilbur and Techno rushing over, Jack grabbing Niki as she lands, pulling her into a hug. There's something different about Jack now that Tommy feels his connection to Life - something off, something wrong. Purpled lingers behind them, eyes wide as he takes in the destruction; Charlie has a hand on his shoulder.

There's also Puffy standing there, Drista floating beside her. Behind her, a man stands with what looks to be parrot wings on his back. It makes Tommy's own back ache.

Tommy can finally his knees buckle when he sees Sapnap, alive and well. Karl, with golden eyes, holds Quackity as the man watches his beloved Las Nevadas he destroyed.

Sean is also there, trusty katana in his grip, with Mark and Ethan.

Everything starts to click into place.

That's how they found the agents when they left. That's how they've been one step ahead, this entire time.

The Red Room has been over L'Manberg, watching, waiting, biding their time as the agents got lulled into a false sense of security.

"Tommy?" Phil asks but Tommy can only watch as the aircrafts land, Red Room agents spilling out into the destruction. Out of the shadow of the rubble, Lizzie pulls Ranboo and Tubbo out. Tommy breathes a sigh of relief.

Tommy turns to Phil. "You wouldn't happen to have Kristin on speed dial, would you? Because we need to have a discussion about God shit."

"Are you-" Phil starts, eyes so concerned and Tommy can't meet his gaze.

Because he can see the Red Room agents waiting. They're all in new gear, all with Widow Bites and Huntsman blades, coated in poison.

"Long story short," Tommy explains. "I really am a fucking God. Tubbo and Ranboo have Life running through their veins after nearly dying. Technically dying. Billiam wants me dead and I can't see him so maybe, fucking hopefully, Niki killed him. Life is shit and I want to sleep for fourteen years. You?"

"Puffy and Dream took down the Helicarriers designed to kill everyone. Dream's in the hospital, no one can find George. S.H.I.E.L.D. looks to be investigating the Syndicate but meet my new son, Grian."

Tommy spares a glance to the man with parrot-wings and rolls his eyes, remembering his name from when Tommy found Scar trying to find the children. "You have a problem," he says and then turns back when he hears his name being shouted.

Over the burning pile of the once floating structure, Bad appears. Skeppy and Ant tail him, while Punz stands a little way away. They all have red eyes.

"Tommy!" Bad greets and Phil's wing snaps out, blocking Tommy from view. "Oh, don't be like that, Phil, I just want to talk."

"Fuck off," Tommy replies. "I don't want to talk. Let the others go from your freaky mind control shit."

"Guests are coming," Bad says. "Then we'll negotiate. For now, I want to say that I'm very impressed."

"Cool, don't give a shit," Tommy snarls. "The Egg fuck can piss off."

"It's not your power to have, Tommy," Bad says, lowly, as if scolding a child. If Tommy had his wings, his feathers would be puffing up at the tone.

"Like fuck it is," he spits. The Huntsman flickers inside and suddenly all of the anger and the throb of his injuries dissipates like smoke. He straightens, eyes falling blank.

He tries to call on his power and there's nothing there. He can still sense things and when he tugs hard enough, he can feel his connection to the others as if preparing to summon them.

But he can't feel the plants he got from Hannah. His wings are gone. And there is a spark of emotions from Schlatt but even that is fading from his grasp.

He has an idea of what's happening.

After all, Tommy can only take the abilities of those he's killed.

If they come back, if they're killed by something- someone else, he can't access it.

He hopes he's wrong.

But even if he isn't, there's a burning inside of him, of Life. His veins glow gold and even if he didn't have this: he's a Huntsman Spider.

He is the Huntsman Spider.

"My fight is with the Department," Tommy tells Bad. "Not you. Not the fucking Egg. I killed the woman, her power is mine. It's fucking mine. So fuck off."

Bad grins. "You think you can possibly--"

Tommy cares about very few people.

The agents of the Red Room can handle themselves. He does love his brothers. He deeply cares for the Minecraft's and Niki.

Bad, does not fall under any of those categories.

And Tommy is so tired. He's bone-deep exhausted. He doesn't want to play around anymore. He just wants this to end.

So Tommy doesn't hesitate to take the rifle in his hands and shoot him in the head.

Bad's eyes widen. He stumbles, half collapses.

Tommy can feel the air shift as Bad rises again, shaking off the bullet wound like it's nothing.

"Oh, Tommy," he says with a grin. The skin and bone and blood heal over, leaving his forehead untouched. "You think you can kill me?"

Tommy, despite the fear, grins back, all Huntsman Spider. "Thanks for the invitation."

With that, he raises his rifle and goes to shoot when the air around Bad flickers. The darkness grows into a strange, swirling circle and Tommy watches as Leslie and Sykunno step out.

Sean, Niki, Sapnap and Tommy tense. If they're here, no one is protecting the children.

The Red Room will have their recruits back.

“Oh,” Bad says, reaching over to pat Leslie on the shoulder. “Don’t worry about the children. The Egg has no use for them.”

And before Tommy can blink, Sykunno stamps his foot into the ground and ice erupts around them. Tommy shoots but Sykunno is quick to pull up a wall of ice, blocking them all.

The other agents don’t move, even as Sarnap stands in front of his fiancés and Sean twirls his katana with a harsh stare. He looks at them all before shouting, “What’s the plan?”

“Try not to die?” Sarnap replies, flames flickering at his hands.

“They’re trying to get to me,” Tommy says, hands tightening on the rifle. “Civilians?”

“Cleared out the minute we saw it dropping from the sky,” Puffy shouts. “What do you mean-“

“They want you dead?” Wilbur interrupts, staring at Tommy and he shrugs.

“You know me, Big Dubs, I’m like catnip for bad guys.” He sees Bad shift and shoots but Sykunno’s ice wall climbs, blocking him. “Hey!” He shouts to Bad. “How’d you find their location?”

The silence is oddly worrying and Tommy follows the red stare of Bad through the ice, all the way to Lizzie, who’s blocking Tubbo and Ranboo from view. He face whitens when Tommy locks eyes with her.

Lizzie can control shadows. She told him point-blank her role was to spy on people, gathering intel undetected.

“I didn’t-“ She start and Tommy debates shooting her before letting the Huntsman in. She didn’t know. They all had guns to their heads, all doing what it took to survive.

Tommy opens his mouth, ready to reassure when the air shimmers in front of Leslie. All of the agents tense and Tommy is quick to follow.

A group of individuals step out and Tommy swears they’re children. He briefly panics but none look like the ones from the orphanage, even if it’s difficult to tell as the ice distorts their features—

(Somewhere in Russia, graves shift and greyed hands claw at frozen soil.

A lone girl watches over them, feeling the red vines pull at her being, detaching their hold on her to latch onto them. It’s a slow process, one that’s taken it’s already dwindling strength.

Then Sky was killed and the Red Room began to fall.

It worked quickly and here they are.

The girl grins at the children before her. “Let’s go.”)

“Itsy Bitsy Spider,” a voice, the girl at the front, leading the others, starts to sing and all of the agents jerk at the sound. Tommy’s mind rattles inside of his skull. “Went up the water spout.”

He watches Niki’s knees buckle and Sean’s eyes fall dangerously blank.

“Down came the rain,” the voice continues and Tommy can’t think, his thoughts are clouded, his mind hazy.

He tries to remember if they deprogrammed this trigger but no memory pops up. It’s as if he’s underwater, eyes watering and ears ringing.

Subconsciously, he calls out for his brothers.

Immediately, all three are at his side. Dream is sitting on the ground, wrapped in gauze. Sapnap is shuddering from the trigger words. George’s eyes are dark as he looks between Tommy and the world around them.

“Tommy?” Dream breathes before looking up at George with wide eyes. “How-“

“Tommy,” George interrupts, grabbing the sides of his face. “Look at me. Focus on my voice.”

The voice singing pauses as a song starts to play. A tune they’re all too familiar with. The Sleeping Beauty.

“Go to the forest, little spider,” Dream instructs, pupils blown as if he’s hooked up on morphine. Tommy’s mind burns at the trigger but it doesn’t work.

He tries to find the comfort in the forest but his body aches and his mind is on fire. He fights for control over himself, willing himself to be present.

Sapnap once said: to feel is to be human, that is why they were spiders. But Tommy has been more human in the past months than he ever was.

He can’t be a human to fight this.

And in the past however many days he’s been without Phil and his family, the Huntsman has begun to crawl back in, covering him in thick web.

“Tommy,” George snaps. “Fight it.”

He remembers the woman asking him: spider or fly? Is he the hunted or the hunter?

Tommy knows now he’s the boy with the broom, destroying the web. He’s just worried about how many spiders he’ll have to kill to do so.

After all, there’s an infestation surrounding him.

“George,” he says, looking into George’s dark eyes. They’re colder than before but that’s to be expected. “You left your ring.”

“How is this relevant?” George hisses.

“Because you have to come back and get it,” Tommy tells him, and with every word he speaks, the less the song has a hold on him. “You told me to survive.”

“I did,” he replies, eyes hardening. “Are you going to?”

Within a blink, they’re no longer standing there. Before him, Phil is blocking him with his wings but the agents are still, waiting. No one is willing to draw blood first.

His sight is hazy and his mind burns so he lets out a shrill whistle. Three return: Sapnap, Tubbo and Ranboo. A fourth joins: Niki.

He lifts his head, meets her eyes.

(In L’Manberg’s hospital, Dream rips away the needles in him and stands. He dresses quickly in clothes Puffy left for when he felt more able.

He feels more than able now.

His little brother needs him, his own injuries be damned.

It takes him longer than he’d like to step foot outside, baseball hat covering his hair and bruises.

A car pulls up, blocking him from crossing the road. The passenger door swings open. He’s met with a dark gaze and a sharp smile.

“Is this your way of begging for my forgiveness?” Dream asks, stepping into the car and slamming the door behind him. It moves before he can put his seatbelt on. “I know how much you hate driving.”

“Tommy and Sap need us.” George says with a harsh swallow, knuckles turning white on the steering wheel, like that explains everything. It does. He briefly meets his gaze. ““Till the end of the line, right?”

Dream grins back, cracks his neck. In the backseat, guns and knives sit, with George’s sniper rifle resting against the door.

“If you try to run again,” he says. “I’m cutting your Achilles’ Tendon.”

George let’s out a shocked laugh. “So you-“

“Yes,” Dream replies, voice soft. “We both could’ve killed each other if we wanted. All is forgiven. I told you: you’re it for me. You’re not getting rid of me that easily.”)

Tommy can’t be human to face them.

But as he stares at his friends and family, the faces of the agents without bodily autonomy, he realises that he's not truly been a Huntsman Spider.

A Huntsman Spider does not fear, it does not feel. It kills indiscriminately. It has no place in the world. It hunts, weaving its web, catching its prey for a cause it will never understand.

Tommy does feel. This entire process - getting Phil, Wilbur and Techno out of prison, killing the Warden, hunting down Tubbo and Ranboo, doing everything in his power to keep them alive - has been about feeling, about killing to protect them, about acknowledging that his place in the world is right beside them.

Tommy understands why he's doing this and he knows if he had to do it again, he would.

His humanity is what has been pushing him.

He may have utilised his training, relying on the Huntsman Spider inside, but this is all because he cares about those around him. He's willing to die for them, fight for them, live for them.

Because he would. If they asked, he would continue living.

He has a family now. He has a group of friends.

He's not alone anymore.

Just like that, everything clicks into place. His mind burns for a different reason as gold floods his veins. Opening his eyes, he's met with different sources of light. His eyes linger on the gold cracks of his own creation in Ranboo and Tubbo, dart over the startling white of Phil, Wilbur and Techno, blink at the flickering, almost glitching of Jack and Mark, and then are drawn to the pulsing red of Bad and the girl, behind her, the other individuals are white with veins of red.

Alyssa's words ring in his head. Maybe touching the others didn't work because there isn't a strong enough connection.

But Bad and the girl are bright, blood red, a beacon to the power burning through them.

Tommy grabs onto his own connections and pulls.

"You have a plan?" Sapnap asks, immediately.

"Sykunno is a buffer," Tommy says. "Burn through his wall."

"I'm the distraction?" Niki asks, blinking at the real form of her standing over the rubble, and Tommy snorts, nods his head.

"You want me to make some noise?" Sean grins, bouncing where he stands. "Dark's going to have so much fun."

"I need to get to Bad or that girl." Tommy says. "Ready?"

“On your mark, Huntsman,” Sean replies and then they flicker away.

Tommy takes a breath. He needs to end this so he can end the Department. Even if that means fighting Dan, his dad. Even if that means fighting the other agents.

“Hey Bad!” He yells and the sound abruptly cuts out. Everyone stills. Tommy grins a wolf smile. “Think fast!”

Before Bad can even reply, Sapnap is throwing a fireball straight at the ice and they all move as one.

Niki starts singing, a siren song that has the agents dropping to their knees, eyes wide with wonder. Jack’s own hands flame - clearly hearing the brief explanation from Niki - and the ice takes seconds to melt. Before Sykunno can counter, Sapnap is rushing in, Sean hot on his heels, katana slicing at Ant and Skeppy. Mark’s form flickers and shifts before disappearing in a cloud of black.

Tommy takes the invitation given to him. He runs forward, ducking under Leslie as he lunges for Bad.

But his eyes catch something in his peripheral vision before he can reach him.

He freezes where he stands.

Standing there, is the girl once blocked by the ice. Long, brown hair, eyes as red as rubies and veins like red vines crawling up her arms.

Behind her, the group of individuals comes into focus. They’re all children, some young, some older. All of their skin is grey, with burning red eyes.

But one amongst them draws Tommy’s attention the most, even as their faces ring warning bells in his head. A boy with black hair and giant, red wings arched behind them looks directly at Tommy. His heart stutters in his chest.

“Hello, Theseus,” Hannah says. “You remember Eryn, don’t you?”

Chapter End Notes

The boy with the wings has a name :)

Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I think I might've found an apartment ;)

TW// violence, blood, graphic depictions of death and injuries, gore, lots of death, major and minor character death, mentions of child abuse, mentions of brainwashing, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy thinks he's going to faint.

It's as if the memories he's been repressing, the memories stolen by the Room, the memories wiped, come rushing back. The boy with the wings. Eryn. The best fighter in their class: the one that could take on Dream. The one with the sharp smirk and even sharper gaze.

It's an effort to look behind Eryn but when he does, Tommy sees the rest of his class: the boys he killed, the boys he watched die, the boys once left in unmarked graves.

Hannah's smile widens. "We can do this the easy way, Theseus," she tells him. "Hand over your stolen power. Or, I will force you to. You really think you can take on all the agents and your past class?"

Tommy knows he can't.

His power is more contained. He's not a powerhouse like Dream or Rae. Even if he is the Huntsman Spider.

"Let them go," he croaks, voice raw and dripping vulnerability. "This is between us."

"No." She replies, bluntly. "Hand over the power and I won't kill everyone here."

Tommy doesn't know what to do.

He can't give her the Life running through his veins, not when the Egg wants destruction. But he can't let his family die. Not because of him.

Hannah sighs and Tommy flinches back at the sound. Her red eyes watch him like a hawk. "Oh, Theseus," she says. "I guess we're going to have to do this the hard way."

Before he can blink, Eryn lunges at him. Tommy is immediately on the defence, barely dodging. Eryn has always been quicker, stronger. They nearly won against Dream before Tommy shot them out of the sky.

He tries to calm his racing heart, tries to focus on his opponent but the others take this as an incentive to charge him. The boy with the birthmark on his neck, bone flexing out of his wrist into sharp points, slashing every time Tommy dances away from Eryn. The boy with orange hair and dark eyes, bared teeth like a shark's, trying to grab at Tommy with claw-like hands.

Tommy is sent back to days in the Room, of training and dancing, of barre exercises, of pirouettes and brisés.

He remembers standing by these boys out in the training fields, sitting beside them during classes, sleeping beside them in the cold of their dorm, wrists handcuffed to the bedpost. But most of all, Tommy remembers them dying. Of too cold nights and startling injuries, of blood blooming across white shirts, of the harsh snap of bone breaking.

Tommy has had a hand in some of their deaths. He is the reason they're all dead. Tommy survived, pushed on, defeated Dream, became the Huntsman Spider.

These boys, so young yet their eyes are so old, died so that he could live.

Inside of him, the guilt of that burns, nearly suffocating him as he twists out of their grip: ballet has saved his life more times than he'd like to admit.

Bad grins at the fighting, ready to step in and grab Tommy when there's a tap on his shoulder. He turns, coming face to face with a man in a suit, eyes completely black and empty.

"Hi!" The man says with a sharp smirk. His voice glitches, the sound grating at Bad's ears. "I've heard you're after the kid?"

"This doesn't concern--"

"Oh," the man chuckles, interrupting him. "It does concern me. I've been caged before, I know what it's like to do anything you can to escape."

Bad blinks and the Egg inside of his mind shudders. "And who are you?"

"I'm Dark." The creature wearing a human face says. "It's a pleasure to meet you."

Bad pulls at the darkness, ready to run or fight, but Dark simply latches onto his wrist. The darkness curls around him as if greeting an old friend. Dark's smirk widens.

"Oh, this is going to be fun."

Tommy sees Eryn pull back and he lunges forward. His legs curl around Eryn as he flips him, grabbing a knife and holding it to Eryn's neck.

"Please," he begs, in Russian. "Please don't make me do this again."

"You didn't have to do it the first time," Eryn replies and that voice, Eryn's voice, makes Tommy want to cry. "But you did. No hesitation. No tears. So why hesitate now?"

Tommy swallows and cuts at his throat, darting away as the others converge. But there is no blood being split. The wound closes as red vines pull the skin and sinew together.

Eryn stands as if that wound was nothing more than a harmless scratch.

The ground shifts and moves under Tommy's feet. It seems Dream is here, then.

"Theseus," Eryn says with a smile that sends Tommy back to the dorms, back to memories he never knew he had. Eryn and him training together. Eryn and him sitting next to each other in the canteen. Eryn and him in the ballet studio, rising and falling in sync, smiles twitching at lips.

One memory hits him harder than the others: Eryn, collapsing in class as his wings came in and Tommy freezing like the rest of his class. He remembers that, remembers the blood. He never knew he sat with them in the shower room, prodding at delicate, torn skin, testing if Eryn could fight without failing.

Were they friends?

Tommy remembers the woman finding him, telling him to follow her out into the training field, the courtyard, and being handed a gun. Eryn was there, on a watchtower, giant red wings wide as he took to the sky.

"Shoot them," the woman had commanded. Tommy had hesitated, he remembers it now, his hand shook at he raised his arm. He did shoot Eryn, though. Tommy knew like all of them did: there was no such thing as the word no back in the Red Room.

There was doing what was expected of them, or dying.

Memories of the chair, of electricity buzzing under his skin, of returning to the dorm, shaking and stuttering.

"They wiped you from me," Tommy hisses and Eryn hums.

"Does it matter?"

Tommy blinks, thrown. With his moment of stillness, Eryn slams into Tommy, holding him down, Tommy's own knife now pressed to his throat. He freezes on the ground, feeling the cold point digging into his skin.

"Unfortunately," Hannah comments, stepping closer. "Killing you would be easier but if you die, that power is lost forever."

“I have to give it willingly,” Tommy concludes, heart pounding in his chest. The knife digs in deeper. Blood bubbles at the surface, spilling over, staining pale skin red.

“Yes,” Hannah agrees, holding out her hand.

“You think you can break me?” Tommy asks with a hysterical laugh. The Room trained him to survive torture, to survive worse than physical and emotional pain. He was taught to compartmentalise and head to the forest of his mind.

Hannah rolls her eyes. “A Huntsman Spider will not break,” she repeats the words of their past trainers before straightening. “Huntsman Spiders do not care. But you do, don’t you, Theseus?”

He’s pulled up, a hand pulling at his hair so he looks up as Eryn keeps that knife to his throat. They make him face the ongoing battle.

Bad and Mark are nowhere to be seen. Corpse and Ethan face off, both staring at each other as Ethan shouts across words to make him break out of his triggered state.

Quackity and Charlie seem to be ducking behind the rubble as Karl faces off against Leslie, moving before she can even pull up a portal, eyes glowing as he senses the timelines and moves accordingly.

Sapnap focuses on Sykunno, orange against blue flame as Dream tries to lock his feet. Ice shards appear to try and stab him if he weren’t paying close attention.

Toast is lying by George’s feet, a pool of blood expanding beneath him. George doesn’t seem to be fazed. His eyes are blanker, almost as cold as Brooke’s as he tries to shoot her and she dodges with ease.

Niki and Minx seem to be dancing as Puffy and Drista focus on Rae. The energy she pulls makes her a dangerous opponent but Puffy is relying on her probability ability and Drista is spawning forks to try and pin Rae down.

Phil, Wilbur and Techno stand close together as Wilbur compels the guards that survived the crash to kill each other. Techno is focusing on Tina, both struggling as she manipulates the metal from the debris to throw at him, while he bloodbends her. She stumbles, eyes wide as her face flushes before paling, over and over again. What’s worse is that Tommy can feel the fear leaking across Las Nevadas, the foreign-feeling that’s all Techno, that makes those around him shudder and shake.

Phil on the other hand focuses on any guard that gets too close. Crows watch as his touch instantly kills. Both Ant and Skeppy try to dart away but Grian blocks them in, a strange, almost scary look to his eyes.

Purpled and Punz face off-

(Punz watches as someone grips onto Purpled. He lunges forward, hitting with all the strength his father taught him to channel with his own beatings. The person fights back but he

can't focus on them or their pained wheezes or the blood staining their nose and his knuckles. He hits and ducks and—

Purpled pushes himself back from his brother, eyes wide and panicked. “Punz!” He screams, as blood drips from his split lip and broken nose. His name comes out slurred and wrong. “Punz, wake up!”

Quackity sees it, sees the fear, sees the red stare of Punz, and takes a broken pipe and smashes it over Punz's head. He collapses after another hit, red eyes flickering briefly before his eyes close.

“Hey, kid,” he says, with his usual cheer, as Charlie makes his way over to sit by Purpled, wiping the blood away from his face with his sleeve. “When your brother wakes up, tell him I'm halving his pay for a month.”)

-it's not pretty.

The originals are trying to approach Tommy, as Lizzie fights Jordan, who's sparking hands keep stopping her shadows, while Dan has his hands gripping the back of Tubbo and Ranboo's necks. Stampy is focused on Squid, as he tries to draw Sqaishey away.

It goes wrong very quickly.

Stampy turns, fingers curling and in seconds, he's curling around Squid, flipping him as clawed hands swipe at his throat. Squid goes down with a bloodied gurgle. Niki freezes at the sound, eyes wide as she yells. Minx goes to attack when Jack shows up, blocking her hit and flipping her. Burning flames hover above Minx, stilling her.

Sean sees his chance and takes it. With a quick, skilled movement, he slices Sqaishey's throat. “That,” he says, calmly, looking at Stampy. “Is for strapping a bomb to Grey's chest.” He looks down at Sqaishey. “Hmm. Smash or pass? Pass. I'm taken, you know?”

Stampy's eyes narrow as Sqaishey collapses.

It gives Niki time to throw herself at Stampy, thighs locked around his throat as she flips him. Her Widow Bites - wrist cuffs that give off an electrical charge - dig into his throat.

Dan let's go of Tubbo and Ranboo. He lunges, tackling her to the ground. Tommy struggles in Eryn's grasp, gasping as his knife cuts in his throat, when he sees Dan pull a knife from his thigh holster. Stampy, Ranboo and Phil also move.

Lizzie doesn't let Niki get hurt.

Her shadows pull from her and cover them all.

When the shadows manifest again. Dan falls to the ground as Phil pulls his hand from this throat. Part of Tommy pauses at that. His biological father is dead by his pseudo-father's hand. An emotion fills him before he crushes it down.

He can't give himself time to feel. Not when he has a knife to his throat.

Lizzie is bleeding from the knife between her ribs as Ranboo and Niki drop to her side.

Sean takes Jordan's stillness as a movement to cut into him. Jordan fights back but Sean heals from anything. The burns marring his neck and chest quickly fade as he shakes it off. Jordan collapses beside Dan.

"Smash," Sean says with a grin. "Those abs? Going to waste? Fuck. If only I wasn't in a committed relationship and you weren't fucking dead."

Stampy, seeing Phil advancing, does something the Huntsman Spiders are told never to do. He takes one look at Sqaishey's body and runs away.

Tommy is about to smile. There is a knife at his throat but the rest of them are safe when his class move.

A few members tackle Ranboo while a few others grab Tubbo. Minx cuts at Jack and Niki abandons Lizzie's body to shove a Widow's Bite in Minx's neck. Wilbur's yell as he stares at his bleeding side has Phil walking over, wings snapping wide as crows drop to stare at the bodies of the dead.

(Phil and his sons cannot die. Neither can Jack or Sean. Even as they're stabbed. Even as Ant stabs Wilbur. Even as Tina impales Techno with metal. The cut from Minx is quick to seal shut on Jack's neck.

Techno can heal using his blood and Wilbur, while more likely to heal as slowly as normal people, just needs to die to heal everything. It's why, when Skeppy breaks his neck, Wilbur shakes it off after a few seconds of death.)

Even Sean is briefly distracted as Mark- no, Dark appears from the pure darkness, throwing Bad's body on the ground.

Sean grins at him. "Smash or pass, buddy?"

"Pass." Dark says after a moment of consideration.

(It screams as the void wraps around its host and starts to rip and tear. There is one thing older than it after all: the pure darkness came before it's birth, it's existence.

The man, this being, this creature isn't as old as it but it's stronger in the darkness, stronger than its host. In a matter of seconds - it could be hours, days, years: the darkness is confusing - the host is worn out, broken beyond repair.

It pulls back, let's its host succumb to the void.)

The other members of his former class now surrounding him pull Ranboo up and walk closer to Tubbo. Tommy's entire body locks at the implications.

Huntsman Spiders are self-sufficient. He is only suppose to need himself. Yet here he is, making attachments because he wants to, not because a mission objective relies on people to comply with him.

He once heard that agents build friendships for the sole purpose of them being the first line of defence, the human shield protecting the agent from those hunting them down. But as Tommy meets Ranboo's blank gaze, Tubbo's panicked one, he can't bring himself to not care.

Tommy cares so much about them.

Tommy doesn't care about his life.

Not when it's them.

Not if it means saving them.

"Okay!" He snaps. "Stop! Fucking- fucking stop."

Hannah turns to him, holds out her hand. The knife is removed from his throat. Tommy moves before it can return.

He kicks out, swinging the rifle around and into his hands, bringing it down onto Eryn's head. He throws himself at the rest of his class, putting himself between them and his friends.

"They don't die," Tubbo says, his back meeting Tommy's.

Ranboo also presses back against them, so they're all facing out. "What's the plan?"

"Don't die?" Tommy hisses. "If Phil kills them-"

"He's a little busy right now, bossman." Tubbo comments, nodding to where Phil seems to be checking Wilbur over, before fitting Ant and Skeppy with a harsh stare.

"Fuck."

"Didn't you say you need to touch her to-"

"She's stronger than me," Tommy interrupts Ranboo. "If I try, she is going to rip the power from me before I can even get a fucking grip."

"Well, then." Tubbo sighs. "We're fucked."

Tommy laughs at the deadpan delivery. Trust Tubbo to pretend to be somewhat calm for them. Ranboo huffs under his breath and Tommy scrambles for some semblance of control, for a flicker of a plan.

He has two things on his mind: save his friends and refuse to hand over the power thrumming through his veins.

He doesn't think about Dan dying. He doesn't think about Tubbo's father dying. He doesn't think about Lizzie dying. Tommy, Ranboo and Niki were able to speak to their biological parents. Tubbo wasn't able to.

From orphans, to children of Huntsman Spiders and Blacks Widows, back to orphans.

"So what's the plan?" Tubbo asks.

Tommy sighs. "Not let the psycho zombie ex-friend of mine, who I couldn't consider my friend because the Red Room didn't allow fucking friendships, kill us. Well. Kill you two. She wants me preferably alive which fucking sucks ass. So, the plan is to hopefully not let her grab you."

"Sure." Ranboo says. When they both look at him in surprise, he rolls his eyes and says, "Adult life is already so goddamn weird. This? This is nothing."

Tubbo frowns at him. "Did you just- did you quote John Mulaney when we might be murdered by dead child assassins?"

"And I said, no, you know, like a liar." Ranboo replies, smugly and Tubbo groans so loudly Tommy can only blink at the pair of them.

Tubbo, seeing his confusion, bites out, "When this is over, remind me to make you watch John Mulaney."

Tommy snorts. "Whatever you say, Tubs."

And then, as if they have been fighting together their whole lives, as if they were a well-oiled machine, they move as one. Tommy focuses mostly on Eryn. They're stronger, faster, having gone quite far into the training course. Ranboo takes on the older ones. His copy-cat ability and sensing helping him to easily fight them. What's most surprising is the ease of Tubbo's movements. His stingers burst from his wrists and he darts and weaves surprisingly quickly.

They may be holding their own but the boys from his class aren't staying down and soon, the three of them will grow tired.

"Ranboo?" Tubbo yells over as his stringer goes through a boy's neck. Tommy's extremely surprised at his lack of flinch. "Why is life a fucking nightmare?"

"Because we're Delta Airlines!" Ranboo, Jack, Quackity, Karl, Charlie, Wilbur, Techno, Drista, Niki, Ethan, Dark and even Sean scream back.

Tommy, Dream, George and Sapnap share a look. Tommy shrugs. His brothers nod and Tommy throws one of the older boys toward them. Sapnap lights him up with fire and Tommy waits for the boy to rise.

He doesn't. There's not even a twitch.

The Huntsman Spider lights up inside of him.

“Sap! Jack!” He screams, pointing before rolling under Eryn’s swipe. They both look over. They both pause at the sight. Then two identical feral grins appear on their faces.

Immediately, flames burn bright.

Tommy pulls Tubbo and Ranboo away as his former class scatter. Eryn dives away and some part of Tommy is glad. His mind burns as his memories flicker in and out. Eryn is- was his friend. Even if friendships weren’t allowed.

So he stands, prepared to lunge when the ground shifts and groans. His head snaps to Dream, who looks as confused as he is.

Thick vines curl from the ground wrapping around their legs. Tommy freezes as the vines lock his legs in place.

“Smart,” Hannah praises. “Very smart, Theseus. If this was a test, you would’ve passed.”

“But?” Tommy hedges, eyes narrowed.

“You think you can beat it?” Hannah asks, head tilted, eyes burning red. “You stole a God’s power, Theseus. All it wants is the power that is rightfully the Egg’s.”

“Fuck. You.” Tommy snaps. “You think I wanted to have this power? You think I like taking the powers of the people I kill? It fucking sucks but I survived. You didn’t. Hannah- Hannah didn’t, Eryn didn’t, my class didn’t. So drop the fucking act. I’m not handing it over and you’re not Hannah.”

Hannah sighs. “Oh, Theseus. When will you learn that the heroes always die at the end.”

Ranboo and Tubbo are pulled forward by the vines, even as the others behind them scream. Eryn watches from where they stand at Hannah’s shoulder.

“Theseus,” Hannah breathes. “I know you’re tired. I know that you’ve been waiting to rest-“

“Fuck off,” he hisses as she approaches Ranboo and Tubbo.

“I can’t access the God’s husband,” she tells him. “Kristin won’t let me get him or the other men, his so-called sons. She’s blocking me. Fighting with what little power she has left.”

“What?” Tommy says, flinching back. Kristin is fine. She has to be. She’s a God. She’s the God of Death.

“It’s ripping her power from her,” Hannah continues. “It’s a slow process. She’s old and strong. But they all break in the end. She will too. As will you.”

“Don’t,” he whispers, pleads. “Don’t.”

“Oh, Theseus,” she coos and Tommy can practically hear the woman in his head, can hear Eret when he used to survive every test, every trial. “You know what you have to do.”

“I’m not-“

“I will spare them. I swear on it’s life.” Red eyes meet stormy blue. “Everyone here will be released. No one else has to die.”

“Just me.” Tommy says and Hannah gives him that Widow’s smile.

Silence fills Las Nevadas.

Tommy doesn’t want to admit it but he is tired. Has been since the agents started to disappear and his family was arrested.

He was doing better, when he was working under Phil, when he was allowed to be the boy before the monster, when he was allowed to be human.

His humanity has pushed him to save everyone here. Not the inner Huntsman Spider. Not the Russian child assassin. Not Theseus.

Just him.

Just Tommy.

And when it comes down to it, when he looks to his friends, his family, his fellow agents, nothing makes him special or different. Like any human, there is a selfishness burning inside of him but also a selflessness.

What’s his life worth compared to Ranboo’s, or Tubbo’s?

A Huntsman Spider would not break.

A Huntsman Spider would find a solution to this problem and escape.

A Huntsman Spider would not care about two people who have no relevance to the mission.

Tommy isn’t Theseus. Not anymore. Not when he got to taste freedom. Not when he was able to live like a human.

Tommy is a boy, a teenager. He’s scared and panicking and overwhelmed with a protectiveness and loyalty that he may never understand.

Spiders are not loyal. They weave webs and hunt for only themselves. Spiders are not pack animals. Sure, they occasionally interact with each other, but there is no desire to protect what isn’t theirs.

Tommy isn’t a Spider anymore. Not now. Not when everything has changed.

His biological father is dead. He has no idea who his mother is. He nearly escaped the Red Room once and was returned to save Ranboo’s life. He escaped again despite the crippling guilt of leaving his brothers behind. He killed the woman. Eret died. Tommy was free.

But Tommy has learnt a very important lesson over these past weeks.

His freedom means nothing if he knows his friends and family can't experience it too.

So what is his life worth? Nothing. Not if it's to save them.

"Just me," he repeats and Hannah steps towards himself.

"Come in from the cold, Huntsman," she says, offering her hand out. "Be at peace."

Tommy ignoring the shouts, takes her hand.

Red floods his vision.

Everything falls silent.

There's a pulling sensation in his chest. He doesn't fight it. He lets himself droop into the red. It doesn't hurt. It's more of a cold sensation flooding his body.

Time ebbs and flows.

He opens his eyes.

Hannah stands before him. He's in Tubbo and Ranboo's living room. Wilbur is throwing popcorn at Techno while Phil tries to stop him.

It's chaotic in a calm way. The cold does not leave his bones.

"I like your limbo," Hannah says. Alarm bells immediately start ringing in his head. Limbo? His limbo does not look like this. "It will all be over soon, Theseus."

This is wrong. Everything about this is wrong.

His limbo is softness. It's grass and cows and flowers. It's feeling warm, feeling content, feeling safe. His limbo is quiet.

He nods, internally panicking but keeping a calm face. "Can I be left alone now?"

She laughs. "Sure. Goodbye, Theseus."

Between blinks she's gone.

Kristin takes her place.

Her eyes have deep bruises under them, and her skin is extremely washed out. She looks almost haggard.

"You've worked it out," she breathes and Tommy nods.

"This is a lie."

“Yes.” Kristin gives him an incredibly soft smile. “It’s not your fault.”

“How do I fix this?” He asks, though it sounds more like a plead. The false limbo glitches in the background.

“You fight it.”

“How?” He snaps. “Why didn’t you fight it?”

“I can’t,” she says. “It’s older than death, older than me. But life? For there to be an entity-“

“There has to be life.” He replies and even her nod is tired.

“It needs Life to be able to control Death. With your power - because it is your power now, Tommy - it will be able to destroy the earth and create a new one.” Kristin reaches for him. A hand brushes at his hair. He leans into the touch. “You need to fight it. Pull that power back.”

He tries to feel for something, anything. He just feels cold.

Kristin must see the look in his eye. Her hand continues to brush through his hair. “I know you only want peace,” she says, calmly. “And I’m so sorry I can’t give you that. If I could, I would.”

Tommy leans further into the touch. “I like my limbo,” he says. “It was quiet. I miss quiet.”

Kristin hums. “I’m sorry you can’t escape this.”

He scoffs to hide the fact he might cry. “I’ve always been trapped. We all knew, even as kids in that fucking hell-hole, that surviving didn’t mean an end to suffering. It’s why a few of them purposefully threw in fights. Or messed up on missions. Surviving meant surviving. For some of them, dying was the better option.”

“But you kept going,” she tells him, so soft, so calm. “Even now, you keep fighting.”

“I took her hand.” Tommy says. “Hannah. I killed her. Shot her in the stomach because they told me to.”

“You killed her because you wanted to survive, and you took her hand because you wanted our family to live.” Kristin’s hand doesn’t stop brushing through his hair. “You’re a good kid, Tommy. You may not think it but you are.”

Tommy blinks at her. She smiles back.

“They’re going to die,” she breathes. “I can only keep my three alive so long as I still have my power. But you can be at peace if you want, Tommy. You can shut your eyes and let the cold settle in your bones. It’ll be over soon.”

Tommy thinks that over. The cold increases, numbing his toes and fingers, feet and hands.

He is tired.

But his family need him.

“We used to say that to each other,” he tells her. “Back in the Room. When the missions were long, when we were gone for a long time, we would tell each other we were coming in from the cold, that we were coming home.” He swallows, straightens. “As kids, with the brainwashing, they told us mother brought us in from the cold, that she fed us, keep us warm from the snow. We Russians, we have nothing but winter.”

Kristin let’s her hand drop from his hair. “Will you accept the cold?”

Tommy smiles. It’s not a pretty smile. It’s a Huntsman Spider smile.

He focuses on his pain, his need to return back to his family, and can feel the burn underneath the freezing cold. Back in Siberia, back when he would train in those harsh conditions, Tommy didn’t allow the chill to stop him from fighting.

He didn’t give in.

Tommy may be more human than spider, but he has those winters in his very marrow. He knows that cold, knows the heat that burnt beneath, keeping him up, keeping him pushing on.

He focuses on it, pulls at that heat. “No,” he says to Kristin before closing his eyes. “No, I won’t accept the cold.”

The fake limbo disappears as does Kristin.

Something starts to scream in layered voices.

Tommy can feel the heat in his body, the lava lapping in his blood. He grits his teeth, bares them like he’s more of a wolf than a spider. This time, when the heat rises, he doesn’t push it away. He lets the flames consume him.

Blinding heat races throughout his entire body and then out.

Tommy doesn’t try to contain it. Even as his nerves scream as they’re burnt. He’s a human. But he’s been touched by Life before he killed the woman. He’s a Huntsman Spider. He’s survived worse odds.

Twenty-eight to one.

Twenty-eight to Ranboo and him.

Gold rips from his veins, out of his hands in a startling bright glow. His entire being glows as his eyes burn golden, deep and like a swirling pool of molten gold.

Gold rips into Hannah, burning through the red as she screams. It races from her palm, up to her throat, turning her veins a sickly yellow as her eyes flash white.

Tommy can feel it there, in her head. The red. The startling cold.

He pulls.

The red shatters.

Hannah collapses.

From there, the gold burns across the debris-filled ruins of Las Nevadas. Eryn is hit next, the gold destroying the red inside of them.

Eryn has a moment of clarity. They look to their friend, floating a few inches from the ground, arms thrown wide, head tilted back as he glows. It's like looking at an old God, at something that shouldn't exist.

Eryn smiles. "Good for you, Theseus," he whispers before their eyes roll back into his head, and Eryn returns to the land of the dead.

The minute he does, the minute the soul is once again returned to Kristin, giant red wings, that look like flames in the breeze, pull free from Tommy's skin. Blood drops from his ruined back, crimson looking more like ichor in the light.

The gold then rips through the agents, golden flames licking at red tendrils until the agents are on their knees, faces blanched, eyes flickering gold.

Rae shudders and Brooke cries and Corpse collapses into Ethan. Tina shakes and Minx runs a trembling hand through her hair. Sykunno takes in a shuddering breath and Leslie hisses. Stampy stumbles from where he's running and Punz's eyes open as the red is removed.

The others watch as gold pulses across the field. Tommy, like this, is what Phil assumes angels are depicted as. Blond hair, flames for wings and eyes burning liquid gold.

This is power.

This is more than power.

This is divinity.

(It shudders as it's hosts are ripped from it, destroyed as easy as breathing. It tries to fight, to body-hop, but the gold bleeds through, ruining any last-ditch attempt to save itself.

It doesn't die but it's as close to dead as something of its nature can be.)

The red cage Kristin is surrounded in fills with gold before the red disintegrates. Kristin drops to Las Nevadas' ground. Her eyes widen as she takes in the sight of the young God accepting his power.

“C’mon,” she whispers. He has to hold it, temper it. Power like that will eat at him if he doesn’t control it.

Young Gods aren’t built to hold their power. Their bodies need to grow into it. Going all out like this can destroy him.

So Kristin does what needs to be done. She drops her head in a bow and prays. Her belief becomes solid in her mind, pushing out.

She believes he will control this.

She believes he will survive this.

She believes he will be the God of Life.

For a moment, the gold simmers, stills. She watches Tommy take in a breath that is more like a gasp.

“Belief?” Phil shouts to her.

“We survive on it,” she calls.

And just like that, her husband and sons bow their heads. The gold retreats, Tommy’s chest rises and falls somewhat steadily.

“How?” A blond man, she believes he’s one of Tommy’s brothers, shouts over. His green eyes are panicked.

“He’s a God now.” She tells him, with a soft smile. “Pray.”

Immediately, everyone else scattered across Las Nevadas drops their heads, some muttering, some silent.

Kristin can feel the suffocating power pull back, towards Tommy. His breathing evens out. The gold curls tight around him, in what looks like an embrace.

She smiles. He will be a good God.

A thousand whispers in his head, all praying to him, all believing in him.

The burn in his chest eases. Something inside of him settles into place, soothes the aches and pains of his body, calms the strange sensation of gold circulating in his blood.

The God of Life smiles before gold eyes roll back into his head. He falls - Theseus, falling, always falling - but this time, he knows he will be caught.

Tommy let’s the darkness take him.

Chapter End Notes

God!Tommy my beloved <3

Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I hate essays! Anyways—

TW// mention of major character death aftermath, mentions of torture, mentions of human trafficking, mentions of human experimentation, blood, injury, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The Saint Petersburg apartment is warm. It's elegant, clean, fresh: very clearly lived in. Oleg Egorov has an ex-wife and two children. They do not live with him but he does have a computer filled with government documents in his apartment.

He works late but is always back before ten.

This time, when he shoulders his door open, humming under his breath, he finds a single lamp on in his study. He freezes where he stands.

"Hello, Oleg." A voice speaks and his blood runs cold. "Don't try to run. I'd hate to speak to you when your knees have been shot."

Oleg closes the door, steps towards the light. He does not have a gun on him but there is one in the drawer in his side-table. He opens the drawer. There is no gun to greet him.

He swallows, steps around the door and is met with the signature look of a Huntsman Spider.

"You've been busy," Oleg speaks for the first time. "Everyone's talking about you."

"And yet," the Spider replies, monotonously. "You didn't bring any protection with you."

Oleg stares blankly. His body is thrumming with fear, so much so, he's practically calm.

"Did I need to?" He asks, quietly. "I have done nothing to warrant this."

The Spider laughs. "You knew about the Red Room and you did nothing. You knew about the Beast Labs and you did nothing. You knew about the assassinations and you did nothing, you even ordered a few."

"And?" He snaps. "Everyone—"

"Everyone," the Spider mocks, "will soon be suffering the same fate as you."

Oleg doesn't ask what his fate is. He knows what happens when a Huntsman Spider shows up in somebody's home. He knows he will not leave his apartment alive.

"Why?" He asks, instead. "Why do this? Why go against your creators?"

The Spider steps closer and he meets icy blue eyes. "Because I never wanted to be created. How would you feel if your son, your daughter, had to endure what we did?"

Oleg sucks in a harsh breath at the mention of his daughter. He knows the training program for Black Widows and shudders to think of his pre-teen daughter having to be taught that.

"If you have a God," the Spider breathes. "I suggest you start praying now. Not that it matters. If there is a Heaven, you certainly aren't going there."

Before Oleg can respond, a bullet is piercing his skull.

Tommy stays in a coma for two weeks. It's a long two weeks as his family watch the steady rise and fall of his chest beneath his hospital gown.

When he wakes, they can all see the change in him. He walks with the grace of a Widow, smiles like a wolf and when his wings retreat into his skin, they leave behind two long scars down his back. They quickly discover those scars are the only ones to ever remain on his skin. He heals too quickly now. Sean is delighted to have someone like him.

When he wakes, he hears about how Phil, Wilbur and Techno are now wanted by the entirety of the American Government. No one dares to step into L'Manberg though, even if the government fears them approaching the President again. The Syndicate is thriving as Phil no longer waits for small time gangs or crime bosses to come to him. The children have returned to their orphanage and Phil has ensured no one will be coming for them after he threatened the American government with nuclear war.

When he wakes, the Hero Commission is in shambles and Las Nevadas is being rebuilt. Puffy becomes the Director of the Commission after an endorsement from Scott Smajor. The majority of the Heroes are dead and Sam has retired to look after Pandora's Vault. Ponk swears to interfere if he starts to act like his brother. But Grian is willing to step in, as is Scar and Gemini, Doc and Ren. Scott isn't happy to see them go but he allows it under the guise that someone he trusts is watching the Syndicate.

When he wakes, the world has changed but the Department is still lurking in the shadows. The Red Room and Beast Labs might be gone but so long as their agents live, the Department will not stop.

So Tommy spends a week being fussed over by his brothers, by his family before he heads to the cow field alone.

They greet him, the low murmuring he cannot understand but longs to hit his ears as they gently bump their heads into him. He lays with them, flowers - from Hannah, or from being

Life? He doesn't think he'll ever know - blooming beneath his body.

"Hello, Tommy." Kristin greets, silently appearing and sitting beside him. He watches, intrigued, as the cows give her a wide berth. "How are you?"

"Alive." He replies, blue meeting dark brown. "You?"

"Better," she responds.

He hums. "Will I be like you? Will I have to leave them all the time?"

She shakes her head. "Death is always busy but life... life hasn't been active in a long time. How many new species have gone extinct compared to being created?"

"Is that why we always saw the woman?"

Kristin's eyes look pained. "Probably. Clara loved being Life. She would create so many beautiful things. After Phil... she disappeared, refused to speak to me. I never knew what she was up to. I'm sorry for that, for not checking on her, for not interfering."

He shrugs, swallows. The pain from the Room will always linger. It will forever be a part of him.

"I'm over it," he lies, then sighs. "I'm... It's in the past. I can't go back and stop it but I can't let it consume me."

She reaches over, brushing a hand through his hair. "You can call on me," she breathes, her voice as soft as the clouds he's staring at. "I will answer even if that means standing in your limbo."

"Because you can't come to earth," he concludes and she nods.

"But you can come to me."

Tommy returns to the Syndicate's base and spends a few minutes grinning as Anchor, the hammerhead shark, circles under him before meeting Phil's eyes from where he watches him. He steps closer through the lobby until he's right in front of Phil.

Sometimes, he looks more Odin than he does Phil. There's a rage to his one working eye, a shift to his wings that portray his fury. Now though, he simply looks calm, warm. He's waiting for Tommy to make the first move.

So Tommy does.

He leans forward and hugs the man, face ducking to hide in his shoulder. Phil immediately reciprocates, curling strong arms and stronger wings around him, keeping him close, keeping him safe.

"You good, mate?" Phil asks.

“I will be.” Tommy says it with finality.

He’s not good now. He doubts he will be for a little while. His emotions are everywhere and he’s trying to work out who he is, what he wants from life.

He does know that inside of his mind there is a list of names and contacts. He does know that whilst he may be more human - more God - than Huntsman Spider, he does have a specific skill set. One he needs to use when it comes to that list of people.

“I think I need to speak to Michelle,” he adds. He does miss his therapist. She was nice.

“Sure thing,” Phil easily replies.

And Tommy goes to his first therapy session since this whole ordeal started.

The funerals happen when everyone is up for it.

Tommy meets Solidarity, a journalist who was the one to spread the story about Pandora’s Vault and the corruption there. Supposedly his boss, Shubble, helped arrange a way to hold onto Fundy’s body until a relative could come.

In L’Manberg’s cemetery, there will be a gravestone next to Sally’s, Fundy’s name etched into the grey. But according to Wilbur, Fundy didn’t want a normal funeral. He wanted to honour his heritage.

Together, they stand at the Badlands Port. Before them, a burial ship sits in the water, covered in clothes and ornaments. There’s one of Tubbo’s stuffed animals and an ancient looking dagger by Fundy’s body, which is draped in an ancient-looking sheet, twigs and branches covering him.

Wilbur is practically catatonic and Techno is flexing out his damaged hand and Phil’s wings keep fluttering. Ranboo is wiping at his eyes and Tubbo keeps swallowing.

Behind them, Puffy stands with Drista and Karl. Sapnap and Quackity are holding Karl up while Dream let’s Puffy lean back against him, George watching from the sidelines. Sam and Ponk are also there, further away but present. Tommy can’t bring himself to meet Sam’s eyes.

“Ship burials were reserved for individuals of high honour,” Phil explains to Tommy, Niki, and Jack quietly. “Kings and chieftains, those who fought valiantly in battle and will be going to Valhalla. We give offerings and then we set the ship on fire to allow the spirit to pass without being trapped as a revenant.”

Jack raises his eyebrows and Phil shoots him a brief, small smile. Jack snorts, Niki rolls her eyes.

Then he gestures to the three of them. “Is there anything you’d like to give?”

He's mentioned giving an offering to them earlier, before they came, which is why Tommy watches Jack go back to the car and pull out a blanket.

"Fundy would only be able to sleep around mine if he had this," he says and approaches the ship, laying the blanket over the twigs and branches covering Fundy's body.

Niki and Tommy share a look. "You've seen what happened with our dead," she tells Phil. "Unmarked graves and memories stolen."

Tommy thinks of how Alexander and Melina took the bodies of his class and Hannah back to Russia, back to their own graves. Corpse and Rae went with them but Tommy couldn't make himself go.

The pain lingers. Maybe when he knows he won't have a breakdown, he'll go. He'll sit with them.

"But, as we've heard, Valhalla is where the warriors go." Tommy says, and holds up one of his favourite daggers. Niki reaches into a boot and pulls out her favourite stiletto blade. "If he's going there, he needs reliable weaponry."

Phil's eyes water as they approach the ship, dropping the blades next to the body.

"I'm sorry," Niki whispers and then mutters a quick prayer in Russian.

They return to Phil's side. Wilbur steps up to the ship, lays his hand against the wood, resting his head there.

The silence is deafening as he cries.

Tommy wants to reach out, wants to comfort him but neither Phil nor Techno move. He looks to Phil for an explanation.

"This is the last time Wilbur will be close to his son's spirit." Phil explains. "To grieve in battle is to follow their fate so Vikings--"

"Take their time to grieve after." Tommy finishes, looking back over to Wilbur. "Alone."

"To lose a child is a pain only a parent can bear."

So they wait for Wilbur to collect himself. When he does, he turns and Phil reaches down for a large wooden stick. Jack's hands flame and he reaches for the end so that the torch glows brightly.

Phil hands the torch to Wilbur and together, Phil and Techno push the ship out. As the waves catch it, Wilbur throws the torch and the ship goes up in burning flames.

They stand there for a long time before Wilbur turns away from the water.

From there, they make their way to L'Manberg's cemetery.

Bad, Skeppy and Ant are buried together. A few of the Heroes pay their respects, quietly. Even with the red vines gone, Bad spent too long in Dark's void, his very being ripped to shreds and the only body remained. As for the other two, Phil turned on them the minute they hurt Wilbur.

They all then converge on Puffy's plot.

Schlatt's gravestone is next to two other gravestones. Tommy assumes they must be the parents.

Puffy doesn't look at his, though. No. She focuses on the gravestone before her, Foolish's name etched there.

This time, Tommy and the others hang back, Tommy's hand wrapped tight around George's wrist to stop him leaving. They have all heard the story by now, they know what happened. George is struggling to separate the Huntsman Spider's actions and his own free will.

Most of the agents struggle with empathy. They were trained to fight and kill mercilessly. They've all killed children. But during their freedom, they've started to build proper bonds with each other, with other people. Even if the last weeks have shifted some dynamics, they're out. They're alive.

The Red Room taught them that mourning was useless and only useful agents survived.

Yet Tommy can see the tears in Dream's eyes, the coldness in George's. This death has changed them. This death shows how different they are.

Tommy makes eye-contact with Sapnap. To feel is to be human and it's clear how they're getting further and further away from being spiders.

Later, Tommy and Sapnap will wedge themselves on either side of George, holding Dream as he comes to terms with emotions they've all been taught to repress.

But for now, they stand side by side, looking over a field of graves, wondering if the Room ever lost this amount of children.

Later, all of the agents and children will appear at the edge of the cemetery and find a clear plot for them, under a large oak tree. A single gravestone will greet them with a single name of a friend they lost. Toast. A few yards away, a collection of other gravestones will sit, nestled together. The originals fought together and died together, parents of children who never really knew them. They won't mourn - they're still Red Room agents - but they will stand in the dying light together, knowing they are the last of the Red Room. They are the legacy that will burn the organisation that created them to the ground.

For now, they simply experience a moment they can't quite understand. Not yet. Not until they heal. Not until they truly feel. Not until they are human.

From there, over a month, Tommy starts to plan.

He hunts down the agents, sits them all in a room, and makes them speak to each other. George, thankfully, does have his ring on but there is still a coldness to his eyes, one that reminds Tommy of the missions in Siberia. He is hyper-vigilant and he refuses to be too close to people.

Tommy takes one look at his brother, at the way Sapnap clearly wants to step in but can't find the right words, at the way Dream holds George's hand in a white-knuckled grip, and decides to step up. He has little brother rights to exploit.

Without a care in the world, Tommy throws himself at George and proceeds to snuggle. George freezes. Tommy cuddles close before rearranging himself, tugging Sapnap down so Tommy's head is in George's lap and his legs are thrown over Sapnap's thighs. Dream is quick to sit next to George, grinning down at Tommy with wide, pleased eyes.

"Right," he says from his spot to the group watching him with small, amused grins. "Sort your shit out. I'm over the fucking staring and sad looks. Talk, fight, I don't give a shit, so long as we can move past this."

They all look at each other and like a tsunami, apologies start spilling out. Toast is gone and all of the originals bar Stampy are dead, too. George starts to relax and Ethan sits between Sean and Corpse with a content smile, Sykunno's head in his lap while Rae, Leslie and Tina sit next to his feet. Niki's haunted eyes, there since her biological mother's death, dissipates slightly when Brooke nudges her and Minx curls an arm around her shoulders.

"I'm not apologising for killing them," Sean says, kicking at Minx until she grabs his ankle, eyes narrowed. "But maybe I should've... paused before instantly murdering them. Felt good though."

Corpse snorts. "You were just pissed about Grey."

Sean nods. "For Grey, instant murder every time."

They speak for a few hours. The ones under the Egg's control talk about having more freedom than when they were triggered but as if there were wearing a leash without a muzzle. They were still collared.

George is struggling with being triggered. He explains it like there was a haze over him and it wasn't until he shot Dream that he finally snapped out of it.

"I realised then," he whispers, eyes focusing on the wall, jaw right from where Tommy gazes up at him, "that if he died, it would be by my hand. The first person I truly trusted. The first person I cared about. The first person I... I loved- I love. He would die because of me."

It shocks him. Tommy realises what's happening.

George, the cold one, the distant one, is open, he's vulnerable. He's lost, adrift. George looks scared for what Tommy swears is the first time.

“But he didn’t,” Sappnap says, voice calm but firm. He meets George’s gaze unflinchingly. Dream pulls George closer. “He didn’t die. You didn’t kill him. C’mon Georgie, you’re a goddamn sniper, who doesn’t have to look at his kills to headshot them. Yet Dream is sitting right there. Even triggered, you purposefully weren’t trying your hardest.”

“I’m alive,” Dream whispers into George’s hair like a promise.

And that is the truth for all them. Maybe not Sean, who wanted Stampy to hurt like he hurt when he saw Grey with that bomb strapped to his chest. Maybe not Tommy, who was fighting a being older than the earth. But the others pulled their punches. They could’ve easily killed one another, just like George shooting Toast, but they didn’t.

“We’re a family,” Tommy says, looking at George, reaching up to poke his chin. “We’re a fucked up one but we are a family.”

They all come to an agreement. Like Tommy, they’ll be speaking to their therapists and getting one if they don’t already have one. The children will only ever have to be children. They will not face the same future the agents lived through.

And, with Tommy’s help, they will shut the Department down for good. They will take up their titles and hunt and weave webs of fine silk to catch and lure in any and all Department members. It will burn and no child will ever have to become a Black Widow or Huntsman Spider ever again.

“We have the names,” Niki says, looking straight at him. “What now?”

“We find them,” Tommy replies, letting his grin become slightly unnerving. “And we kill them.”

Tommy calls a meeting with all of them: Heroes, Villains, and agents. He calls them all, even the children because they have a right to know, and explains what he’s going to do.

“I’m not asking for permission,” he tells them. “And I’m not going to be told not to do this. They’ve fucked us all over for long enough. I guess I wanted you to know because the last time some of us started to disappear, this shit show happened.”

“Do you need resources?” Phil asks, wings shifting behind him.

“I might do,” Tommy replies with a shrug. “If you want to help I’m not going to stop you.”

“We’ll help,” Puffy responds as several other people nod.

Quackity steps closer. “If you’re going to pick them off, wouldn’t starting with the leaders be the better option? Surely it would be less dangerous for you, Tommy.”

“It’ll draw too much attention,” Tommy says. “I want to keep it as quiet as possible. When people are scared, they employ bodyguards and have extra security.” At the stares, he rolls his eyes. “Fuck off, I know I’m trained for this shit but it’s easier to shoot someone when

they're alone in their shitty apartment than breaking into a fucking panic room after killing twenty random guys."

Wilbur snorts. Dream laughs his tea-kettle wheeze. Corpse grins up at him.

"So we can help?" Techno asks, eyes sharp. His hand has stopped shaking.

"If you want but we need to actually communicate it." Tommy says. "I'll probably need a lot of us for the bigger members, like the inner circle, or when they're tipped off."

"What do you need now?" Phil asks and Tommy grins.

"I have names but I need locations, people of interest, employment, shit like that. There are probably other agencies aligned with the Department I'll need to hit too."

"Well," Tubbo speaks, stepping forward to smile at Tommy. It's an oddly unsettling smile. "It's a good thing you're best friends with a hacker, huh?"

"I want you to train me." Ranboo says to Tommy as he stretches in the Syndicate's gym. Michelle suggested that before he start hunting, he should re-familiarise himself with his surroundings. He's now living with Tubbo and Ranboo and Niki and him spend hours in the ballet studio. Some of the other agents - Corpse was the first - have started to come along too.

In that house, Tommy builds a nest even if he doesn't want to. Tubbo gifts him Henry with a small smile and Phil collects his record player from his apartment. It's not home, not yet. He's still hyper-vigilant, still unsure about his safety.

But he's with his friends, his family. That's enough for now.

Tommy pauses, lifts himself up. "Why?"

Ranboo blinks at him. "What? What- what do you mean why?"

"If your reasoning is that you would've been a Huntsman, then no." Tommy lifts his arms, raises on his toes. "You don't have to do it because you think you should. That's a dumb fucking reason. None of us are going to give you shit for getting out."

He drops back to the ground and then reaches forward, hand flat by his feet before he straightens once again. Ranboo is looking at him, a strange look to his eyes.

"No," he says, quietly. "I don't- I'm not asking because of that. I don't want to feel scared like that. Not again. I was terrified and I- I couldn't do anything."

Tommy tilts his head, thinks it over. "Fine," he agrees. "But-" He holds up a finger. "-Techno will be watching, and if you want to stop, fucking tell me. You get to have a day off."

He says it as firmly as he can because he never got that. Tommy and the others didn't get to say no, didn't get to back down or have a day to themselves. It was do what they said or die.

Tommy didn't get a choice.

Ranboo gets to have all of them, as many as he needs, as many as he wants.

Which is how, after two weeks, Tommy comes to the conclusion that if Ranboo had progressed further in the program, Tommy doesn't know whether he would've survived.

He supposes, as he watches Ranboo move as fluidly as he can, it all depends on Eryn. If Tommy shot Eryn, he would survive. The woman needed Tommy to kill Kristin: he was the only one that could.

But if Ranboo shot Eryn, Tommy's ability might not have been seen and Tommy wouldn't have made it to the end. Not unless he killed Ranboo.

The thought has him finding comfort in his brother's arms as Dream runs careful hands through his wings, realigning feathers. Sapnap is warm where Tommy's head rests on his chest and George is curled under Sapnap's chin, eyes closed as he sleeps. Ever since Tommy woke up, on the bad days, they've gone back to sleeping in shifts.

Tommy thinks about his classmates, about how some of them gave up, how some of them fought to the bitter end.

He thinks this as Techno steps up to fight Ranboo. Now, Ranboo isn't cocky. He's quiet but sarcastic and while there is a newfound confidence in his shoulders, he isn't cocky.

But Tommy doesn't tell him what his teachers told him. He doesn't mention that learning to fight is a lot different than actually fighting someone.

He doesn't mention that cockiness kills.

Tommy watches as Ranboo steps up and Techno follows. He seems to be the only one to notice Niki appear at the doorway, resting back against the frame. From there, Techno taunts him. He lulls Ranboo into a false sense of security.

Then, as Ranboo tries to flip him, Techno digs his heels in, wraps an arm around Ranboo's neck and holds as he thrashes. There's a panic in Ranboo's eyes but Tommy knows Techno would rather stab himself than ever hurt his younger brothers.

"What?" Ranboo hisses out when Techno finally releases him.

"You have the moves but not the muscle, not the improvisation needed to take someone as skilled as Techno." Niki speaks and Tommy snorts as the other two jump.

"You're built like a noodle," Tommy says with a grin.

"You're built like a noodle!"

"Yeah but I've been fighting since I was five. Like, intensive, I will die if I don't win, fighting." Tommy points out. "I have the muscle but more like a Widow than a Huntsman."

Sapnap is built like a tank and that's why he's fucking scary. George looks like he would fall because of a slight breeze and that's why he's fucking scary."

Ranboo blinks. "So you've been training me to think I can beat you when I can't?"

Tommy's grin widens. "Yep!"

"Why?"

"Cockiness kills," Niki recites. "Most of the time, fighting someone comes down to luck if you're both skilled."

"I wanted you to learn that my type of skill, a Huntsman's skill, takes time." He nods to Niki. "And also that. Don't think you're better than your opponent. The most dangerous people are the unpredictable ones. Like Sean."

Ranboo nods, thinks it over, and the next time Tommy meets Ranboo in the gym, Tubbo is also there.

Tubbo doesn't want to be like Tommy, that much is clear. He watches them fight but he rarely joins in. He can hold his own, like Ranboo can, but there's no desire to learn.

"I'm the tech guy," Tubbo says. "Your man in the chair. I don't want to hurt people."

"You have nukes," Tommy and Ranboo say in unison. Tubbo rolls his eyes, scoffs.

"And? Deploying a nuke is a lot easier than snapping someone's neck. Like the trolley problem. Pressing a button is easier than pushing someone off a bridge."

Tommy tilts his head. "If you're joining me, you need to be able to hold your own against someone like me."

"I can't beat you, Tommy." Tubbo mutters, wings stilling behind him.

"Maybe not," Tommy says because Tubbo has Huntsman blood and with the right training, he could beat Tommy. "But you can survive me. In a fight, that's good enough."

Which is how Tubbo ends up joining.

It's also how they end up talking about their biological family.

Before this, Tubbo didn't want to hear about his father and Ranboo keeps dodging Niki as if she has the plague.

But with Niki watching over them - Techno is out with Phil and Wilbur, causing havoc somewhere, Tommy can only imagine poor Scott having to deal with their chaos - the words come spilling out.

"I wonder if I have a brother," Tommy says as he rolls his shoulders. Tubbo is curled on the ground, panting harshly and Ranboo lies next to him in the starfish pose. Niki meets his eyes.

“You two are related so my dad or mum probably had more than one kid, right?”

“Bet it’s Dream,” Tubbo hisses and then pauses. “Wait, he’s Puffy’s kid. Uh. Sapnap or maybe Corpse.”

“He looks nothing like Corpse.” Ranboo replies in a wheeze.

“You could have a younger sibling,” Niki says, flexing her feet as she steps up to face him. Her eyes briefly flick to Ranboo’s. “Like I do.”

Tommy tilts his head. “Maybe. Is there-“

“Shroud.” All three of them say and Tommy blinks.

“Wow, okay. Fuck. No hesitation?”

“No.”

“Nope.”

“Nah.”

Tommy frowns at them. “You’re all fucking mean.”

There’s a lull as Tommy lunges for Niki, both of them not really fighting as they dance around each other.

“Lizzie said my dad took me away?” Tubbo asks, quietly.

“Yeah,” Niki replies, voice small. “Lizzie also sold out Tommy so I don’t know if she’s really a voice of reason here-“

“To save Ranboo,” Tommy interjects. “I mean, it was shitty but I get it. Tubbo’s dad hid him, like mine did, but they wanted me more.” Tubbo winces and Tommy rolls his eyes, stepping closer to gently nudge his hip with his boot. “Tubs, don’t feel bad for shit your dad did. You got out. So did Ranboo. That’s fucking great. Both Niki and I got out too.”

“So we’re all a little screwed up but we should be on the right path?” Niki asks and Tommy snorts.

“Yeah. Exactly.”

It’s a start. A rocky one, an unsure one. There’s more to discussion and Tommy intends to try and find any information available about their biological parents but for now, it’s enough.

They have each other. They’re alive. That’s what matters.

In the end, the others help. Grey has a lot of contacts from the Beast Labs, who were transferred to different facilities. Melina also knows more: explaining that whilst her husband

dealt with the bodies, she spoke to the agents involved.

They plan and with information from Scar, some of them start picking off the agents working within S.H.I.E.L.D..

Corpse, about three months in, offers to train Tommy with his summoning ability.

It's hard work and mentally exhausting. Dream or Techno end up having to carry him to his room after training, even as he swears he can walk himself. Those days, when one of them drops him atop soft sheets, they return with a washcloth to wipe the blood from his nose. No one mentions that it's crimson with gold speckles.

Corpse grins the first time it happens. "Progress," he tells Tommy. "When I started connecting to more than three people, the nosebleeds happened. Now, I can connect to multiple people."

So Tommy keeps going, keeps pushing himself and finds that not only can he summon those to him, he can go to them. It's not teleportation, considering his body remains frozen where he is, but he can see what they see, hear what they hear.

The recoil of snapping back into his own body makes him faint the first time. After that, it's like a punch. Then a slap. Then a nudge.

Corpse helps him hone it until he can jump between his own body and someone else's as easy as breathing.

He ends up fighting against both Tubbo and Ranboo as he jumps back and forth between himself and watching Phil hold Syndicate meetings. Or, if it's late, spying on Niki as she returns to her Nemesis role of hunting down abusers.

Tommy finds that he enjoys it.

As much as he hates the Room, and is glad that it's gone, he misses the simplicity of it. Living under Eret and the woman meant he didn't think, only did as he was told. Training, whilst hard, made Tommy feel strong, made Tommy feel like he was worth it.

Sometimes, he wonders what life would've been like if he hadn't blown it up.

After those training sessions, he seeks out Michelle.

"Making decisions is hard for people who weren't conditioned to follow orders, let alone people who were," she tells him, with a soft smile. Her hair is a neon green now. He's pretty sure she has more piercings. "But admitting to it, seeking me out, shows how much you're improving. I'm really proud of you, Tommy."

"But I don't understand," he breathes, Henry gripped in his hands. "I don't want to go back but I- it was easier, I guess."

"Tommy," she starts. "During your formative years, you were abused. That changes your brain. Added to that, you were brainwashed and tortured, having what you call mindwipes.

Of course you can see this rationally: no one would want to return to that horror. But your brain is used to that, is comfortable with it. So breaking that cycle is going to be extremely hard and yet-“

“I’m here.” He whispers and she grins at him.

“Exactly! You’re already trying to break that cycle. Relapses are common and you should never be ashamed of your emotions.” She leans forward, pats his knee. “Recovery isn’t linear and that path may be winding, you may stumble over unforeseen obstacles or turn back to find an easier way forward. So long as you keep trying.”

Tommy is trying, and he will continue to do so.

Six months after discovering his full abilities, after the Egg disappeared and Kristin confirmed it was unlikely to make another appearance, Tommy finds himself in the Syndicate’s base, surrounded by plans.

The Department, despite training spiders, is a snake in the grass. It’s slippery and will attack with a speed and strength Tommy will have trouble defending against.

He says as much to the agents and the Black Widows scoff.

“Oh, Theseus,” Minx breathes, eyes darkening, promising pain. “Did you not listen to any of Madame’s lessons with the Widows?”

“A Black Widow constructs a beautiful web of the finest silk,” Leslie speaks, the Russian spilling from her lips like venom.

“And waits patiently in the centre,” Niki continues, voice as soft as a lullaby, as soft as a gun’s muzzle against a forehead.

“After luring her prey in,” Rae follows, smiling like a wolf with teeth sharp enough to tear flesh.

“For the perfect moment to strike,” Tina adds, voice as cold as Siberian snow.

“To devour and leave no evidence behind.” Brooke finishes, a sweet smile on blood red lips, hiding the monster behind a porcelain mask.

They all fall silent.

Tommy may have forgotten how terrifying his counterparts were. Maybe it’s because they hide it better than the Huntsman Spiders, what with their different training styles. Maybe it’s because Tommy sees them as sisters, not as formidable killing machines.

Either way, he watches Sapnap shiver and Corpse snort. Sean is grinning at them, looking very proud.

“You’re saying we lure them into a web?” George asks, straight to business. Tommy’s just glad the coldness is starting to melt from his eyes.

“We’re saying that you boys are the best hunters,” Tina says with a shrug. “But we’re better at going undetected. You hunt, we catch them in our webs.”

“Flush them out,” Dream breathes, green eyes flashing as the plan comes together in his mind. “We hunt the underlings, make a point, make it obvious and the leaders will be cocky, they’ll never expect us to hunt them, let alone win against them.”

“That’s where we come in.” Niki grins. “The top officials will make the most mistakes. Their glass houses have made them easy targets: our Handlers and orders were the only things protecting them.”

“So let’s throw a stone, huh?” Sean replies, rocking back on his heels. “It’s been a while since I’ve killed a politician. I’m getting antsy.”

They all then turn to Tommy. Corpse pats his head. “What’s the plan, boss?”

Tommy pauses for a second and then his lips spread into an unnerving grin. His spine straightens, his eyes darken and he clasps his hands together.

“Well...”

Sergey Viktorov does not enjoy his job. No, he doesn’t wake with a smile knowing he has to go to work and experiment on those children.

Is he satisfied? Oh, absolutely. His work is saving people. Through his experiments, their world can be slowly pushed to peace. After all, the Department demands order and order must be maintained.

Whilst he does not enjoy his work, he is satisfied by it. He does return home knowing he’s making a difference.

Men like Sergey do not have trouble sleeping.

Men like Sergey do not fear repercussions for the things they do.

Men like Sergey do not care about anyone other than themselves.

So even though he’s heard rumours about lone Huntsman Spiders on the prowl, he doesn’t panic or worry. He has nothing to hide, nothing to fear. His work is for the greater good and Red Room agents are never sent after their own.

Which is why when Sergey wakes in the night, he doesn’t assume anything is wrong. He merely rubs the sleep from his eyes and stands, making his way to his kitchen for a glass of water.

He does, however, freeze at the sight of what looks to be two Huntsman Spiders waiting for him. One sits at his desk, fingers clicking through all of his work, downloading it all to a flash drive, wings fluttering behind them. The other watches him carefully.

“What is the meaning of this?” He snaps. “Who are your Handlers? I need to-“

“You know,” a voice speaks behind him and Sergey flinches instinctively, turning, keeping his back to the wall so he can keep them all in his vision. The person is another Huntsman Spider but a confident one, that’s evident by the easy way they hold themselves. “Every time I think we have all the names of the Department, more keep popping up.”

“Tell me-“

“Hush, Sergey. There will be time for you to speak later.” The Spider steps closer, turning to the other Spider at his desk. In English, he asks, “Do you have it all?”

The other Spider nods. “His lab is out of the city and filled with at least fifteen people-children. Girls from what I can gather.”

“Retinal and fingerprint scanner right?” The Spider questions and Sergey may not be fluent but he understands enough. He starts to sweat, the foreign feeling of fear making him shake.

The other Spider nods. “Or the back-up pin.”

“How are we playing this?” The standing Spider asks and the confident one steps closer to Sergey.

“Well,” the Spider speaks, back to Russian. Sergey meets cold blue eyes. “Give me your emergency pin to get us into your lab.”

“If I don’t?” Sergey hisses. The shaking gets worse.

“I’ll cut off your finger and gouge out your eyeball.” The Spider speaks, calm and sure and bone-chilling. Sergey’s eyes widen. The Spider snorts. “So, Mr Viktorov, how would you like to do this?”

Chapter End Notes

Bamf!Benchtrio my beloved <3

Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

And I'm back!

Uni has been annoying but I've finally got the paperwork through for my flat! As for this fic, I should be updating every week (on the weekend) until this is finished. That's why I've been away: I've been writing most of these chapters so I can stop with my unpredictable schedule.

TW// mention of child abuse, mention of brainwashing, very brief mention of possible noncon, mention of a dead animal at the end, blood, weaponry, death, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream doesn't like waiting. Unlike George, who can sit still and zone out, Dream needs to do something.

Which is why, sitting outside of the lab has Dream bouncing his knee to get rid of the excess energy building up. Sapnap keeps checking his gun in the backseat while George calmly looks out of the windshield, spine straight and eyes sharp.

Dream is considering stepping out into the cold air and pacing up and down the street when Tommy appears.

"Eight-four-three-nine-six-four-four." He rattles off in Russian. "Tubbo says they're young kids. Probably all girls."

Dream nods and they all slip from the car, Tommy following behind. The building before them looks like a normal office block. They all know better.

"How are they coping?" Sapnap asks as they cross the street, slipping towards the back entrance.

"The guy broke easily," Tommy says. "I told them that they could leave but both wanted to stay. I'm watching them, I've got this."

"It's a good thing you have Corpse there," George adds, eyes snapping around to scan their surroundings. "Just in case."

Tommy snorts. Dream presses the number in. The door slides open.

“Have fun,” Tommy says before disappearing.

Dream takes a single second to meet their eyes, waiting for their nods before he pushes in, gun raised.

Once in, Sapnap sets his hand alight, lifting it to the smoke alarms. Immediately the alarm starts ringing out and the sprinkler system kicks in.

The three of them walk down the stairs, Dream leading, George in the middle, Sapnap bringing up the rear. They move as one, as a well-oiled machine.

With each door they pass, Dream checks before Sapnap sets up the explosives while George makes his way forward. Within minutes, they’ve cleared the first floor, making their way further down the maze of corridors.

The next door Dream opens has him freezing.

“Dream?” George hisses.

“Fuck,” he murmurs and shifts so that they can see.

Before them, a version of the chair sits. This one has different restraints and medical equipment lines the walls. Dream eyes the bags of fluid suspiciously.

“At least we know we’re in the right place,” Sapnap says, already working on the explosives.

“Where are the kids, then?” Dream asks and with a shared look, they once again continue down the corridor.

They find rooms of training equipment, rooms of desks and chalkboards, an armoury, canteen, and even a shooting range. Each new room has anger boiling in Dream’s blood.

How dare the Department replicate the Red Room. How dare they do this to other children.

It’s worse when they open a door to find a dormitory. Thirteen young girls, with their hands handcuffed to the bed frame, blink up at them. Standing in the middle, between the lines of beds (there are twenty beds, but only thirteen girls and that thought has bile climbing up Dream’s throat), is a lone woman with two guards behind her.

She’s old but even with wrinkled skin, her spine is straight and her eyes are sharp. When she makes eye contact with George, she smiles, baring straight white teeth.

“Seventeen,” she greets and George’s head tilts.

“Hello, Madame.”

Dream straightens. “I thought Madame B. was-“

“I was too old to accept Clara’s gift.” The woman interrupts, in a way that has Dream flinching as if expecting a blow. Sapnap’s eyes burn at the sight. “But all of your blood work

is extraordinary. So long as I have a regular shot, my ageing slows. Doctor Kudrin is extremely good at her job.”

“How many others?” Sapnap snarls and she clicks her tongue in a disappointed fashion.

“Girls,” she speaks and immediately the girls look to her. Dream remembers when that used to be him. “Is that the correct way to speak to me?”

“No, Madame.” The girls reply in unison.

Her smile widens. “Red Room agents should-“

Two shots echo through the room.

The guards slump to the ground, blood pooling from their heads.

George is in front of her before Dream can blink, gun pressed tightly to her forehead.

“I would be very careful with what you say next,” George says, quietly. He reaches forward and rips a necklace from around her throat, throwing it towards Dream. He catches it, and starts to work on unlocking the children.

“You always did have potential, Seventeen.”

“Every time I think of you, my mind falls empty.” George says. “There’s a reason my mind has been wiped of you.”

“Is that a question?” She asks, head tilting in a familiar way. Dream has seen it on all of the Widows, on George and Corpse, even sometimes on Tommy.

That particular thought has him stilling briefly. Blue eyes and blond hair and sharp smile. So much like Tommy it has him repressing the instinctive shudder.

“It’s only a question if you answer it.”

Dream feels like he’s watching a spider try to web a snake.

“Spiders are spiders, regardless of gender.” She tells him. “My ballerinas were the epitome of perfection but even they needed to get messy sometimes. The program was created for girls but Clara wanted more, she wanted soldiers and spies. Did you know that the name for the first trial run of the boys was the Wolf Spider Program?”

George studies her as Sapnap rifles through chests at the foot of their beds, holding out shoes and coats for the girls to pull on.

“Why change it?” Dream asks, as he opens a side door, finding an empty shower room.

“Black Widows are trained to seduce, to hide in plain sight.” She says, not looking away from George. “Men are easily led, easily driven by their so-called animal instincts. So long as

the face is pretty, they don't look deeper. They could never accept that a woman was capable of such atrocities."

"And?" Sapnap snaps.

"The Red Room requires subtlety." She finally looks away from George, to Sapnap. "We're not training you to be animals, we're training you to be hunters. Wolf Spiders are opportunistic hunters, whilst some build burrows and lie in wait. Huntsman Spiders stalk their prey, running it down with speed and stealth. There's no point creating a weapon only for it to bite you."

"And yet, here we are." George says, voice as cold as Siberian winds.

Dream wonders if he's asking the right questions. This was almost too easy and Madame doesn't mention what happened to the first boys of the Red Room.

Something in the back of his mind burns, as if a trigger he's yet to find is waking up.

"You need me alive." She says, calmly. "How else will you find out about your mindwipes? What about finding the others like me?"

The smile that splits across George's face is bone-chilling. "Oh, did I forget to mention that I know why I was mind wiped?"

Madame B. swallows. There's something wrong about it, about the fear in her eyes. "And the others?"

"Remember Weapon X? At the facility he was known as Jack. You remember what his ability was, don't you?"

Her face pales rapidly. "I don't see how--"

"He remembers everything," George interrupts. "Are the children ready?"

"Yes." Dream tells him.

"Good."

"Wait!" Madame B. hisses. The hands she raises in a surrender are shaking. It's wrong. Dream steps forward. "Seventeen--"

"Thank you for your lessons, Madame. I'll be sure to use them against my creators."

"Eighteen, eighty-three!" She snaps in a language that has Dream frowning as he tries to work out what it is and the temperature of the room drops. "Benign, homecoming!"

The word is phrased wrong. Dream notices it a second too late.

Everything goes hazy and Dream sways.

When he opens his eyes - he closed them? - Madame is gone. He hastily flips his wrist and fifteen minutes have passed.

“Fuck,” George groans. Dream, shouldn’t in this situation, find that attractive.

(He does.)

“George?” Sarnap asks, eyes focusing on the shaking girls. Thank god they’re all still here and alive.

“We need to go,” George says. “We’ll talk about this later.”

Dream meets his eyes. “Are you good?” He asks, quietly.

George nods, frown pulling at his lips. “I’ll be better when this facility is nothing but rubble.”

Twenty minutes later, with a flash drive of information, three men and thirteen girls watch as the facility explodes and crumbles into a cloud of dust.

Anton Chemezov likes his life. He’s high up in the government with a pretty wife and a prettier mistress. He doesn’t care for the people he exploits: it’s his job. It’s why, when given the option, his personal bodyguards are Black Widows.

They’re highly skilled and gorgeous.

Oh, and unable to say no.

Anton hears about the supposed fall of the Red Room. He hears that the newly dubbed Odin of the Syndicate now owns the agents. He hears that Sharpe went over and never returned.

Anton has also heard that a couple of scientists and Handlers have been turning up dead.

He’s not worried: he was never a scientist or Handler. Still, Anton isn’t stupid. He keeps a security detail with him at all times until someone gives him the all-clear, which is how he finds himself with three bodyguards as he drinks in his favourite club, waiting for his mistress.

“Mr Chemezov?” A soft voice, a slight German accent lining her words, asks beside his elbow and he turns to meet a petite woman wearing a bright pink wig. Beside her, another woman stands wearing a bright purple wig. They both have sharp eyeliner and painted pink lips.

“Yes?” He replies, openly eyeing them up. They both step closer, a hand on his thigh, a hand on his shoulder, creeping up to his neck.

“Ana couldn’t make it today, unfortunately.” The woman continues. “So she sent us instead.”

“Is that okay?” The other woman asks, a slight Irish lilt there.

Anton grins. “Definitely.”

He doesn’t notice the other woman passing, grabbing the phone the first woman slips from his pocket. He doesn’t notice when the other woman presses a poisoned ring into his neck, not when she leans close asking what drink she should order.

If Anton was paying attention, he would see the signs of a Black Widow luring her prey into a beautifully crafted silken web. All soft words and softer touches. Sharp fangs, filled with venom, hidden behind pretty features and a prettier smile.

He drinks and ten minutes later, the phone is returned and the two women head to the bathroom to fix their perfect makeup.

Within the hour, he will suffer a heart attack where he sits and the women will leave with a goldmine of contacts and information.

“Dream found thirteen girls,” Techno says, holding his phone up for Phil to take. He scans the messages, notes the group picture of small, whip-thin girls with empty eyes. “Leslie is portalling them.”

“Is Wilbur sending over the documents to the orphanage?”

“Yep!” Wilbur calls, carrying in his laptop.

Phil looks at his sons and a part of him mourns.

When Wilbur smiles like this, the scars from the thread through his lips is more obvious. The acid sprayed at him has left scars like freckles dotting the bridge of his nose and cheeks.

With the loss of a few of Techno’s fingers, holding things has become an issue and Phil has found him staring at objects in annoyance multiple times over the course of these months. The damage to his hands have left him with chronic pain and a near constant tremble to them.

Phil has come away the best. His feathers have grown back and despite his blindness in one eye, he only occasionally bumps into things, or misjudges distances. With the crows help, he’s able to carry on as if nothing has happened.

So much has happened.

Phil wonders, not for the first time, if gifting his sons this life was the right choice. Not being able to die is not always the kinder option.

“We’ll look after them.” Phil says.

“That’s what I’m worried about.” Techno says, looking up at him. “The Russians have noticed that their people are dying. How soon before the Department decides to pay us a

visit?”

Wilbur laughs. It’s a cold laugh, one that promises pain. “Tech,” he grins. “I thought you wanted to let out that rage.”

Yes, Phil thinks, maybe death is kinder.

“So,” Sapnap says, raising his eyebrows at George. Dream is handling things with Leslie and the girls, leaving them both alone. “Want to explain?”

“Madame B. started the Red Room.” George speaks, slowly, as if to a child. “She was the one who trained the ballerinas.”

“I know that.” Sapnap replies, shifting gear as they drive through Russian streets. “I want to know why you know her. She was gone before I got there. I think.”

Memories aren’t to be believed when they’ve lived through the Room.

“I know her because she trained me.” George says and Sapnap has to focus not to swerve into oncoming traffic.

“What? What the—“

“She didn’t like the woman.” George continues, calmly, even as Sapnap notes the way his hands flex in his lap. “She thought the girls were better, subtler. When I graduated, she introduced me to a Professor Pchelintsov. He was like her: they’d been there from the start.”

He pauses. Sapnap doesn’t try to speak. The silence washes over them.

Then, quietly, George says, “I don’t remember what happened when I met him. I just remember dancing until my feet bled. It wasn’t until I returned one day to Sean and Felix laughing. They were calling me the Boogeyman.”

“So she trained you to be more like the Widows?” Sapnap deduces. George nods, hands still flexing.

“I think Sykunno also experienced it. Corpse was the last one. I think. It gets fuzzy a lot.”

Sapnap doesn’t push. “Well, we need to find her and this Professor. I’m assuming he’s also alive.”

“Probably,” George hums. “There was a Doctor, too, the one she mentioned, but they’re not who I’m worried about.”

Sapnap turns the wheel, briefly flicks his gaze over. “Don’t say shit like that, George. If you’re worried about something, I’m fucking terrified.”

George scoffs, rolls his eyes. “Shut up.”

“I’m serious! I’m going to have to call in reinforcements-“

“Keep your eyes on the road!” George snaps, hand snapping out to keep the steering wheel straight.

Sapnap snickers. Sometimes he’s too easy.

“Who should we be worried about them?”

George takes a deep breath. Inhale. Exhale. “One: Red Guardian.”

“Okay, pause. What? I thought that guy was a myth.”

“He’s not.” George swallows. “But he’s stupid and strong.”

Sapnap notices the sudden hesitation, the sudden, shocking look of brief fear flashing in George’s dark eyes.

“George,” he says, quietly. “Who?”

“The first and only survivor of the Wolf Spider Program.” George replies, voice low, eyes haunted. “Niko Constantin. Last I heard, he went feral, tried to kill Eret, so he’s rumoured to be spending his days in a gulag.”

Sapnap thinks this over. “You’re worried that’s where Madame went,” he tries and George gives a sharp nod.

“He hated that they changed the program.” George turns to look at Sapnap. “He has a personal grudge against every Huntsman Spider. You know Sky is the first Huntsman? Well, most of that class died because of Constantin’s grudge. He’ll be coming for us.”

Sapnap looks to the road and sighs. “Sometimes, I wish we could go back and just kill people. It was easier than this shit.”

Tommy can’t stop himself from lounging in the seat as Corpse drives and Tubbo types away in the backseat while Ranboo stares out of the window. The radio is faintly playing something and Tommy finds himself raising his eyebrows at the lyrics - Corpse starts singing under his breath - but nodding along to the beat.

The buzzing under his skin calls for him to mess with the technology in front of him. The Warden’s power is a little annoying.

Well, most of the abilities he has access to are. With his new found Godliness, he’s found that his other abilities are now frozen. He can summon people and his wings are in working order but the powers he was starting to feel have remained somewhat hidden.

The soft murmuring of animals will always just be that: murmurs, too low for him to understand. He can’t shapeshift: his bones ache at the mere thought and trying had him

passing out into Techno's arms. He can hear the electricity buzzing from the Warden's power but he can't control energy, it makes him vomit.

He hasn't consulted Kristin but he has an idea as to why.

Much like his family, he's once again frozen in time. Only now, it's because he's a God.

He wonders if there's a way to access them or if they'll always be a part of him, always at the edge of his vision, too far to grab.

"Where to next?" Ranboo asks. Corpse shrugs. He understands now why George refuses to drive.

"Igor Gusinsky." Tubbo speaks. "He should have the information on any agents in Europe and America."

Tommy shuts his eyes as Tubbo tells Corpse the address. They'll need to catch a train. That's when he'll sleep.

In Siberian snow, a lone man stands in a thick, fur coat. Reddish-brown hair is jaggedly cut over his dark eyes and scarred face. A rifle rests against his shoulder as his hand grabs onto the dead rabbit's foot. Red blood slowly drips onto the snow.

"I didn't expect to see you here." He speaks, hoarsely. He hasn't spoken to another person in a long time. A very long time.

"Your debts are paid." The woman responds by the gates, icy blue eyes sharp. The guards stationed to watch over him shift uneasily. "You're freed."

He blinks at her. "Why? Who am I being sent to kill?"

The smile she gives him is wolffish. "The Red Room is gone," she states and he freezes, hand tightening on the rifle. "The Widows and Spiders are out, free. They've begun to pick off every member of Department X they can find."

He shifts. "Ah," he hums. "They hold no loyalty to you, you hold no loyalty to them."

Icy blue eyes continue to meet his own but he can see the way she tenses. Interesting.

"How does it feel, Bohdana, to have them all turn against you?"

She scoffs. "Shouldn't you be enjoying your new found freedom, Constantin?"

The dead rabbit is released. It's body falls heavily onto the snow. He cracks his neck, runs a bloody-gloved hand through his hair.

"You're right." He says, flipping off the guards as he walks through the gate. "Let's go. I have some spiders I need to trap."

Chapter End Notes

Hmmmm plot! Also these new antagonists are from the actual Black Widow comics (and the Red Guardian is from the film).

Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

Hello lads!

TW// graphic depiction of torture, mention of child abuse and brainwashing, mention of past death, death, blood, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Igor Gusinsky knows more than he's letting on. Tommy can feel it in his bones as he sits on his kitchen chair, watching Tubbo hack into his computer.

He's not scared. That's what first tips Tommy off. Sure, he's shocked when he opens his door to find them inside but he's not panicking, or sweating, or begging. He's calm. Too calm.

The inner Huntsman Spider twitches, confused.

Tommy has met marks before that didn't fear death. He's met marks that wanted death. He's never known a mark to sit there and watch as his computer history, his life's work is stolen from him.

With Ranboo also watching over the man, Tommy tugs on his connection to Dream. A flash of cold washes over him and then he's standing in the orphanage, watching the young girls be introduced to the others.

"Somethings wrong." He says and then pulls Dream to him.

"Like what?" Dream asks, immediately tense as he scans the living room they're in. It takes Dream three seconds to tense. "He's not reacting." Tommy pointedly looks at him. Dream sighs. "Get the others."

Tommy pulls George and Sapnap to him, then Phil, Techno and Wilbur. It makes his brain ache but he doesn't move, doesn't twitch. He keeps his attention on Igor.

"What's up?" Wilbur asks.

"He's not reacting," George points out. "He knows about Huntsman Spiders: he should be begging or at least asking why."

"It's a trap." Techno states, hands perfectly still, red eyes burning.

Several heads snap over to look at him. He meets their gazes unflinchingly. Tommy doesn't stop looking at Igor, refusing to acknowledge the people he's summoned.

"How many members of the Department have you already killed?" Techno asks with a sigh. "Tommy, you said it yourself, it was only a matter of time before they got suspicious."

There's a long pause. George is the first one to break it.

"Summon Corpse, get him ready." George says before turning the Phil. "We're on the road but you need to find a way to see if police have been deployed."

Wilbur immediately pulls away from Tommy's control and Tommy lets him go. In his place, Tommy focuses, calms his breath and pulls Corpse to him.

It's harder. There isn't a familial connection but it's Corpse. In a way, it's like summoning a cousin. Plus, with Corpse's ability, summoning him is harder because his brain naturally resists.

The man appears, blinking in surprise before talking in the rest of them. He immediately tenses. "What's happening?"

"It's a trap," Techno repeats and Corpse narrows his eyes.

"Hey, Tommy." Corpse squeezes his shoulder. "Calm down. You've got this. If he's really tried this, he's got another thing coming."

With that, he's pulls away and Tommy relaxes his hold.

Dream turns to Tommy. "Any cameras, blink once for no-?" Tommy blinks.

"Any traps you've missed?" Tommy blinks, gives him a brief flash of a glare. Sapnap snorts, George grins, leans over to look at what Tubbo is typing at.

"Anything that made you hesitate before you stepped foot into his house?" Tommy blinks.

"Just an instinct?" Sapnap speaks and Tommy blinks twice. "Shit."

"Nearly done." Tubbo says in English and even then Igor doesn't twitch. George nods from Tubbo's shoulder.

"He's deleting everything. Smart." George says, proudly and Sapnap gasps.

"Was that pride? From our Georgie? Our resident cold bitch-"

"Sap," Dream huffs and Phil laughs. Sapnap rolls his eyes, pulls away. Tommy let's him go.

Igor turns. They all still.

"You know," he says to Tommy, dark eyes staring intently. "You all seem too young to have graduated."

Tommy scoffs. “And what would you know about the program, Mr Gusinsky? According to your records-“

“We both know how our government falsify records.” He interrupts and Tommy raises his eyebrows.

“He’s stalling.” Phil murmurs.

A strange panic sits in Tommy’s gut. He’s capable, he knows he is. Tommy has faced worse than a man, even if he is currently calling an army to him.

But this isn’t only Tommy facing this threat.

Tubbo and Ranboo are new to this. They may live with Phil, a crime boss, but they’ve never experienced this type of threat before.

Tommy has to look out for them, ensure their safety as much as he has to watch his own back.

Tommy tilts his head at the man, asks, “Is this your way of pleading with your life? Those records aren’t really yours?”

Igor laughs, startling Ranboo into straightening. “No,” he says. “I’m not pleading with you. I’m not a good man. I’m simply surprised that this is what you’ve decided to do with your newfound freedom.”

A tugging sensation pulls at Tommy. He finds it and tugs back. Wilbur appears.

“Get Corpse.” He commands and Tommy does so easily. Corpse appears and Wilbur immediately starts speaking. “You’re looking for the local police. They were deployed five minutes ago and they seem to be calling SWAT.”

“How?” George asks. “They’ve been here longer than that.”

Wilbur explains that his information is basic considering their hacker is currently a metre away from Tommy but Tommy ignores him. He walks over to Igor and looks at him, really looks at him. Igor looks back, face open but eyes guarded.

“Falsified records.” Tommy says and then turns to Tubbo, nudging the chair leg with his boot. “How easy was it?” He says in English, phrases it like he’s boasting and Tubbo snorts.

“Too easy, really.” Tubbo replies.

Tommy hums under his breath, walks around the man and scans the room more closely. He looks at the walls, steps across the wooden floor, notes the lack of pictures on the wall. In fact, there is nothing inviting about the room whatsoever. There are no ornaments, no mess.

Tommy realises what has him worried.

“Hey.” Tommy nudges Tubbo’s chair leg again. “Can you find his date of birth for me?”

Tubbo looks up at him before shrugging. "Sure." His typing fills the quiet. Seconds later, he says, "Third of the fifth, nineteen eighty-four."

Tommy looks back at Igor. Corpse, Dream and George all freeze. "Let me guess," Tommy says. "He was born in Volgograd hospital and was placed into an orphanage."

Phil frowns at Tommy. "When we first met, you told me you were from Volgograd."

"It's on all of our files." Dream whispers as Tubbo looks up at Tommy.

"How did you--"

Igor moves.

Tommy lunges back.

His family disappear as he focuses on not getting murdered.

Igor is fast. Very fast. He slams a boot into Tubbo's chair leg, throws his own chair at Ranboo before rounding on Tommy.

"You Spiders are all raised the same," Igor says, head tilting, watching him like a hawk watches a mouse. "You're told not to be cocky yet here you are."

Tommy stares back, fear burning into anger. "I was going to kill you quickly but if you start shit, I will end it."

Igor laughs. "See? So confident in your own abilities."

Tommy doesn't respond. He throws himself at the man, ducking under a fist and kicking out his legs. Igor catches himself before he goes down and Tommy flicks the knife out from his sleeve.

They clash in the kitchen, stray punches and jabs. With every hit, Tommy's brain quietens as the Huntsman lights up inside of him.

In the back of his mind, he wonders if Tubbo and Ranboo have left or if they're watching this.

Tommy slams Igor's head into the kitchen counter and Igor's hand darts forward before bringing his elbow back. Tommy pushes away only to feel something cut into his neck.

They both freeze.

Tommy lifts a hand to the side of his neck, only to find blood gushing out.

The light-headedness doesn't hit him, nor does the fear.

Not when his blood starts to sparkle with gold flecks.

A strange, pulling sensation lingers in his neck. Igor's eyes widen. The next time Tommy presses his hand against his neck, the skin is smooth.

"That should've..."

It's Igor's turn to be fearful.

Tommy grins, flips the blade in his hand. "I thought you knew who I am?"

It's a bet but the whole situation isn't adding up. Tommy guesses that the files Tubbo has been sifting through are faked.

The narrowed eyes tell him everything.

This isn't a normal low-level agent. This is someone who was sent to find out what they know and kill them. This is a professional but not a Huntsman Spider.

"Now," Tommy says, calmly. "I'm guessing the police are a couple of minutes out, right? So either you tell me everything now and I kill you quickly or... Well. I'm sure you can tell."

The minute Corpse is thrown back into his body, he's moving. Out of the car, safety flicked off his gun, taking the stairs two at a time. When he reaches the door, he's met with Ranboo and Tubbo staring at him. Fear lines their visible features and Corpse has to remind himself that these are teenagers with very little combat experience.

"Tommy?"

"Getting answers," Tubbo answers, disgust lining his tone.

"Ah," Corpse says, then gestures to the stairs. "Get in the car. We'll be down in a minute."

Both of the boys look worried to leave their friend but the gurgle behind them - the sound of someone repressing a scream - has them booking it down the stairs. Corpse gathers himself and enters, finding Tommy taking a knife to the mark's ankles. By the blood pooling at his hands, he guesses Tommy started with his fingers.

"Ready now, Igor?" He hisses and Corpse has forgotten who this boy is.

He may be a God, may be a teenager like the others but he is still a Huntsman Spider. Being a cold-blooded killer runs through his veins, and he breathes violence and bloodshed.

"Fuck. You." The mark snarls and Tommy starts to pull at the skin. In seconds, the same gurgle appears.

"Hey," Corpse interrupts, stepping closer. The mark blanches at the sight of him and his scars. "I've got this."

He grips the mark's wrist and then says, "Answer his questions, truthfully."

Without hesitation, his mind firmly in Corpse's grasp, he starts speaking.

He weaves a tale of a woman angered at the state of her organisation and a man who wishes to lead. He speaks of how they joined forces and left to hatch a plan to bide their time and take over the organisation they abandoned.

Sirens sound, making them all tense.

Igor ends his speech by looking at Tommy and saying, "Madame B. could've made you into marble."

Corpse freezes at the name as Tommy rolls his eyes.

A simple name and memories rush back of being en pointe, of days spent dancing and lost to the fake narrative Professor Pchelintsov created. Corpse remembers seeing Sykunno there, remembers the way George kept being sent on more and more missions.

He remembers the day Madame left.

She had tried to bring them with her, along with a few of the Widows she personally believed had the best potential. Eret wouldn't budge and Madame was gone before the woman could be involved.

"I am made of marble, dickhead." Tommy snaps and shoots him in the eye when the sirens draw nearer.

They take their exit through the window.

Once they're on the road, Corpse waits until they're a good distance away before pulling over and tugging on his sensation to Leslie.

A portal opens up. She appears a second later, frown to her lips. "Is everything okay?"

"You need to get everyone together," he says, sharply. "We have a problem."

Puffy sighs as she stares down at the paperwork before her.

One son, once lost, has been returned to her. One son she previously had, has been taken permanently from her. One daughter who has survived through all of this, is both the same and different.

Drista rarely leaves her side now. She's quieter, too. It hurts Puffy to know her daughter is hurting and there is nothing she can do to change it.

And to drive her stress levels higher, with the current family issues, also comes the issues with the Hero Commission.

Their numbers are drastically down. Of the original members, only Puffy and Drista remain, despite her near begging for Karl to return.

His mind is damaged, he tells her, and he would be a sloppy hero. She would take a sloppy hero over not having a hero at all but he declines every time.

She needs heroes. As much as she trusts Phil and the Syndicate, with the recent incident at Pandora's Vault, they've changed. They're sharper, angrier.

The other gangs, crime rings and kingpins have noticed. L'Manberg has been surprisingly crime free recently.

Puffy fears for when those others try to test Phil's power. It's going to be messy. She needs help.

She knows she can call upon Grian, Gemini, Scar, Ren and Doc but they're Scott's people. She may trust Scott but she doesn't trust S.H.I.E.L.D.. They like to meddle, like to intervene. If she lets them in, they will never leave.

But Grian is lurking somewhere in this building. Ever since Phil chirped at him, he's not left. Grian doesn't want to join the Syndicate but he's clearly attached to Phil already.

An avian thing she will never understand considering she isn't one.

"Mom?" Drista asks and she looks up, finds green eyes watching her. "Is everything okay?"

"I'm just a little stressed," she admits. "Being the Director of the Hero Commission is actually a lot of work."

Drista laughs. Puffy preens at the noise. "We'll find more heroes," Drista says, when she stops laughing, tucking a piece of blonde hair behind her ear. "Or we can just wait until the agents return."

Puffy smiles. "I suppose we can."

Puffy puts all of her power of probability into stopping a possible approaching bloodbath. She prays for peace.

Niko Constantin surveys L'Manberg with a critical eye. It is like any city but Niko can smell the hidden corruption running through the roads.

Here, the Red Room operatives live. Here, their bosses stay.

Niko has been given a folder full of information on the plane ride over. He's read up on the Syndicate and has discovered all of the many criminal ties to them.

It seems Odin - formally the Angel of Death, but due to his recent visit to Pandora's Vault (which was being revamped) he seems to have changed - has his hands in a lot of pockets.

Whilst Odin has the power, his sons are also formidable. Niko would rather not have his blood bent or his mind controlled.

Still, he needs answers. He's been given his freedom and sure, he has no loyalty to Madame but he does respect her. He does like to repay his debts.

If she's giving him these people, he's more than happy to follow through.

It's been a while since he's killed high-ranking individuals. He misses it.

But he can't just walk into the Syndicate like this. He needs connections, needs threads to pull, needs a name for himself.

So, with a smile, he waltzes over to where Las Nevadas is being rebuilt. A quarter of the whole area was saved and the casino seems in tiptop condition.

He heads there first.

A man in glasses, and a shirt that says 'Goopy Boi' greets him at the door. "Hello, sir! Can I check your ID, please?"

Niko fishes it from his suit pocket with ease. He smiles at the man, making sure to keep his wolf teeth hidden. The man scans it before grinning and handing it back.

"Enjoy your time!"

"Thank you." He says, steps to enter and then pauses, turns. "You wouldn't happen to know who I should speak to if I'd like to invest, would you?"

The man nods, rapidly. "Of course! That'd be Quackity."

Quackity, the same man mentioned in the papers regarding Sapnap's mission. Quackity, who is engaged to Karl, a former Hero. Quackity, who is the personal lawyer for the Syndicate.

"And where is he?"

"In his office. I can show you if you want?"

Niko's smile widens. "Please lead the way."

Chapter End Notes

Me, staring at a dartboard filled with painful plot ideas: hmm wonder where this dart is gonna land—

Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

Today, we're meeting some people ;)

TW// mentions of child abuse and brainwashing, murder, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Okay, rewind.” Tommy says as he lays across the Syndicate’s couch. Dream and Sapnap share a look before picking him up so that they can sit down. George just perches on the arm of the couch with a deep sigh.

“Yes?” George says.

“You three,” Tommy says, pointing at Sykunno, George and Corpse. “You fuckers got trained by a crazy bitch who has been drugging herself to stay young and she’s now training other kids to be Widows?”

“Yep.” Sykunno says, leaning back against Corpse’s side. “The whole ‘working to the bone’ saying? That was Madame for you.”

Sean, who has Grey pulled back to rest against his chest, rests his head on his shoulder to say, “She hated me. Said I was too violent, like the Wolf Spiders.”

No one knows why Grey is here, especially when he’s not an agent. No one wants to mention it though, not with the protective glint to Sean’s eyes.

“About that!” Tommy snaps, sitting upright, pointing at him. “What the fuck? Why was I never told about these random guys?”

“Constantin was the only one who survived.” George says, patting Tommy’s head and laughing when he swipes at him. “They were only a rumour when I was there.”

“I remember Madame talking about him,” Niki says, head in Minx’s lap as the woman drags a hand through her pink hair. “She hated him. I do think it’s creepy that I forgot everything about her until you said her name.”

“I fucking hate the Red Room,” Minx mutters and Rae snorts.

“Don’t we all.”

Tina holds up her hand in the brief silence. “I don’t remember her at all.”

“She left after training me.” Corpse says, quietly hand wrapped lightly around Ethan’s wrist. “So anyone in the years below wouldn’t have seen her.”

“Even then, she had favourites.” Leslie murmurs, nodding to Niki and then looking to George.

Tommy groans. “We’re so fucked. First, this crazy bitch who has been training more Widows. Second, this Constantin fucker. What’s even his deal apart from killing every Huntsman he can get his hands on? Lastly, anyone working for them.”

“Alexei.” Sean says and then stuffs his face into Grey’s shoulder. Grey rolls his eyes and pats Sean’s head. When he speaks, it’s muffled by the fabric, “He’s in a high security prison: Norilsk.”

“In Norilsk?” Dream asks and at the nod rolls his eyes. “That’s going to be annoying to break into.”

“I thought it was shut down,” Grey says. “The whole uprising that happened?”

“Oh, it was.” Niki smiles. It’s not a pretty smile. “They reopened it a decade later. The harsh conditions made it a good place to dump people and leave them.”

Grey blinks. “Oh.”

Sean snorts. “That’s Russia for you,” Ethan comments, drily.

“Why... why are we breaking into it?” Sapnap asks and Brooke laughs.

“To get to him first, obviously.” Brooke grins a shark’s grin. “If we kill him before they can get their hands on him, we don’t have to fight him later on.”

And then, like the traitors they are, they all turn to Tommy. He narrows his eyes. “What the fuck are you looking at me for?”

“You broke into Pandora’s Vault.” Tina reminds him. “In fact: you broke in and broke out after killing the Warden.”

“And?”

“You did that alone,” Minx says, with a shrug. “If you can do that, you can get us to Alexei.”

Tommy sighs. “As if none of you have broken into a prison before. Okay, so—“

Puffy stares down at her phone. “These kids,” she mutters and hears Phil’s laugh and Quackity’s snort.

“I’m both proud that they’ve told us and concerned that they’re going to do this.” Phil says. He sounds tired, she notes.

“It’s another stress adding onto more stress,” she replies.

“Yeah, Phil, how does it feel to have every criminal in America shitting themselves?” Quackity asks and Puffy laughs at the squawk from Phil.

Their children can handle themselves. They may come home battered and bruised but they will come home.

Puffy holds onto that thought as she continues to laugh at the two men bickering.

Quackity doesn’t trust easy. Niko can see it in his eyes, the way he holds himself. Distrust lines every feature. But Niko doesn’t need Quackity to trust him, he only needs a meeting.

And currently, there’s no sign of his guard dog to stop him.

“Everyone wants to talk to Odin since Washington.” Quackity says, swirling his drink around. Niko wonders how he got that scar over his eye. “Most to pledge loyalty but not you.”

Niko leans back in his chair. “Why lie? I’m loyal to no one. I’m here because I have information regarding Russia. If he doesn’t want it, then I’ll be catching a plane to the Caribbean.”

“Information?” Quackity asks, interest piqued and Niko misses this, misses being an agent, misses being a Wolf Spider.

He likes gathering information, likes hunting people down. Sure, he prefers the violence more, that’s why he was benched. Niko was their best agent but he was too wild, too untameable, too much wolf and not enough spider.

“Niko Constantin,” he says, keeping the smirk from his lips. “A Wolf Spider. He’s been recently released from a Siberian gulag and he’s coming here.”

Quackity’s eyes widen, he takes it: hook, line and sinker. “A Wolf Spider?” He breathes and Niko nods. “You know this how?”

“I’m like you: my work is information finding and collecting.”

“And your price?”

Niko smiles, keeps his canines hidden. “Meeting Odin is the price. I’d like to tell him myself.”

Quackity runs a hand across his face, fixes the beanie atop his black hair. “I’ll see what I can do.”

“You don’t have to come.” Tommy says as Ranboo and Tubbo walk up to stand beside him.

“We do.” Tubbo says. “Who else is going to help you hack in?”

“The Warden’s power that’s currently inside of me?” Tommy replies and dodges Tubbo’s swipe.

“We’re a team.” Ranboo says. “We do this stuff together.”

Tommy rolls his eyes. “We’re literally pulling a prison break along with an assassination. You can say you don’t want to do it. No one is going to fucking judge you.”

“We want to.” Tubbo reassures him. “Plus, I think I’m starting to understand Russian servers. It’s quiet interesting actually because-“

“Talk to George about that shit.” Tommy interrupts. “I know the basics but that’s it.”

Tubbo pouts at him. Ranboo laughs. Tommy hates to admit he cares about these boys but he does.

“Ready?” He asks and they nod. “Fine. Let’s get this shit over with.”

In Pandora’s Vault, Sam shivers, then sneezes. Thankfully, he doesn’t end up detonating an explosion. Ponk lifts his head from where he’s been studying the security cameras. “Cold?” He asks.

Sam shakes his head. “No... I- I don’t know.”

Ponk snorts, looks back to the cameras. “Maybe somewhere, someone’s breaking into a prison.”

Sam scoffs, rolls his eyes. “You think I’m psychically linked to prison breaks?”

“As if we haven’t lived through weirder stuff.” Ponk replies and Sam laughs. He’s not wrong.

Tommy sits in the aircraft, double-checking his weaponry. It’s quiet and calm but there’s a level of apprehension in the plane. Alexei, from what he’s heard, won’t come quickly and they need information on Madame before they can kill him.

It’s going to get messy.

Tommy prays that Tubbo and Ranboo will be kept mostly out of it.

“Ranboo.” George murmurs and Ranboo stands, looking out at the wintry morning and nods. George grabs his rifle, slings it over his shoulder and then holds out his arm.

Ranboo grabs his wrist and they both disappear in a cloud of purple. There's a pause and then Ranboo appears once again.

"George?" Dream questions.

A second later, George responds through the comms, "In position."

"Theseus, you're up." Dream says and slides the aircraft's door open.

Tommy steps up, wings rustling at the thought of flying. Sykunno also joins him at the door, along with Dream. Unlike Tommy, both of them have parachutes.

They wait for Tubbo, typing away on his laptop to nod. "I'm in. Alexei Shostakov is on the third floor, cell eighty. Right now, he should be in the canteen."

"Let's go." Tommy mutters and then throws himself out of the plane.

For a couple of seconds, he lets himself free-fall and then he spreads his wings wide. He immediately catches the air and he sighs in relief. Nothing feels quite as good as flying.

His wings flap in the icy air as he flies towards the prison. The snow is blinding but Tommy pushes forward.

In his comm, he hears Sapnap say, "In position. When do you want the fire?"

("Why do I have to play the prisoner?" Sapnap groans. They all share a look. He narrows his eyes. "You think- I am not the one most likely to end up in jail!")

He looks to Minx and then Sean. Minx laughs. "Firstly: fuck you. Secondly: this is a male prison, idiot, and I'm not a man, am I?"

Sean, on the other hand, frowns as he runs a finger down the blade of his katana. "I know! That's what I said, Sappy! But everyone said I couldn't go."

"You don't have patience." Rae says and Sean rolls her eyes.

"Hey! I'm not that ruthless. I only ever win Among Us when I'm teamed with Sykunno, my true love."

"I thought your true love was Grey?" Corpse rumbles as Sykunno starts to blush and babble. They all know that he's really the most bloodthirsty, he just hides it well under his sweet smile.

"I can love multiple people, Corpse, jeez. Try being more inclusive before they cancel you on Twitter."

"None of us have Twitter," Leslie reminds him with a tired sigh and Sean waves his hands.

“I might have a secret Twitter which is selling government secrets! You don’t know my life.”

“You’re all exhausting.” George mutters, looking at his rifle longingly, as if hoping it will somehow become sentient and shoot him in the face.)

Tommy flies low, almost kissing the snow before rising high, perching atop a guard’s tower.
“George?” He asks.

He doesn’t hear any gunfire but he watches as the other men in the watchtowers suddenly drop. He can hear the men below him collapse.

“Dream, Sykunno?” He checks.

“Ready.” They repeat.

“Sap, go.”

A few seconds later, a loud siren starts up. Tommy grins.

“Tubbo, you’re up.” He says, eyes sharpening - why did he never realise how good his eyesight was because of his avian nature? - as guards and prisoners run out into the cold air.

It seems what Tubbo is doing, locking the doors and stopping escape, is enough because not all of them are out here. He still can’t pick out Alexei though.

And of course, because it’s them, the plan quickly falls apart.

The guards look up, see the empty watchtowers and chaos ensues. Some spot Tommy and he’s forced to drop and hide against the roof so that he doesn’t get shot. George, on the other hand, is shooting at anyone who looks up, only this has the downfall of the prisoners turning on the remaining guards.

“For once,” he hears George hiss. “I want a plan to go smoothly. Is that too much to ask?”

“Yes.” Several voices through the comms respond.

Tommy presses his comm, switching channels. “Please tell me you’ve got something.”

“Breaking into a government facility isn’t fucking easy, Theseus.” Minx snaps back and Tommy can hear bangs of bullets leaving chambers.

“Shockingly enough,” Niki says and there’s a pause, a snap, a scream and then a scoff. “I think the government is onto us,” she continues and Tommy snorts.

“What gave that away?” Rae asks, sarcastically.

There’s a low shuffling sound and Tommy can’t help but ask, “Are you charging up sand?”

“Gravel.” Rae replies and the repeated echoes of explosions make Tommy grin.

“Ooo,” Sean’s voice comes through and Tommy can hear his laughter along with the sound of his katanas slicing through flesh. “I think I’ve found the correct room. Is the big, red door a give-away or too fucking obvious?”

There’s a popping sound and Tommy hears Tubbo enter. “Thanks, Sean. You need to look for-“

A rumble has everyone falling silent. Tommy sits up and frowns when no one tries to shoot at him. In fact, all of the people on the ground have fallen deathly still.

Tommy immediately flicks channels. “Report?”

“I-“ Sykunno pauses. Tommy can make out Sykunno and Dream by the gates. “Do you think we could get Brooke here?”

“Why?” Tommy snaps.

“I think,” Dream says slowly. “I think that when I moved the ground, I accidentally shifted the snow too.”

Tommy follows where their line of sight.

The inclines around them seem to be shuddering.

“Dream.” Tommy whispers. “Big brother. Please tell me you haven’t started a fucking avalanche.”

The silence is deafening.

“Dream?” George snaps.

“Would you like an honest answer or a hopeful one?”

“Oh fuck,” George groans.

They both hear Sean popping in to mutter, “That was hot.”

“In other unhelpful news,” Sapnap jumps in. “We have a big problem.”

“What now?” Tommy says, wishing he could sleep.

“Would you like the good news or-“

“-Sapnap, I will skin you-“ George snarls and Tommy jumps from his perch to land beside Sykunno, wings tightening at his back.

“Jesus, Georgie! Good news, I’ve found Alexei.” Sapnap says. “Bad news... bad news is he doesn’t want to come.”

“Knock him out then?” Skyunno suggests.

“One, he’s like double my size. And two, he’s built like a fucking tank.”

“You have fucking flaming hands!” Tommy yells, eyes watching the shuddering incline.
“You need to fucking move before this entire facility ends up buried in snow.”

Tommy ignores Sapnap’s protests and changes channels. “Tubbo? Give me something.”

“He was a trainer,” Tubbo immediately starts rattling off. “Former test pilot who become a decorated Hero of the Soviet Union. He was given the same training as a... Niko Constantin. From there, he seems to have trained the future generations before starting to become more and more ruthless. There’s a report here about a massacre and that’s why he’s here. It seems —“

Tubbo chokes. Tommy stills. “Tubbo?”

“He was... Dan and Jordan tried to kill him.” Tubbo breathes. “After, Lizzie was also taken to the chair.”

Ice settles in Tommy’s veins. He changes channels as he stalks forward. The prisoners and guards part like the Red Sea.

“Sap, I don’t give a fuck what you have to do, grab him.” He hisses into the comm.

Dream is watching him carefully as he follows behind and Tommy can feel George’s sharp stare. The Huntsman inside burns.

A minute passes, the ground still shuddering under their feet as Dream tries to stave off the inevitable avalanche. Sapnap pulls along a man in a white shirt and black trousers. His beard is flecked with grey and his eyes a dark blue. Tattoos cover any available skin.

Alexei Shostakov grins when he see Tommy and his red wings.

“Theseus, I assume,” he greets in a thick Russian accent. “I was wondering when you’d be paying a visit. Did dear ol’ daddy send you?”

Tommy looks Alexei in the eye and grins back, all teeth and malice. Alexei’s wince is subtle but Tommy catches it nonetheless.

“I’m going to enjoy killing you,” Tommy replies, softly.

“Two minutes,” Dream mutters and Tommy continues to study the man before him as the aircraft flies closely under Corpse’s steady hand.

Ranboo appears, after teleporting George, beside them in a flash of purple. “Ready?”

He doesn’t wait for an answer as he grabs both Sapnap and Alexei. A second later, he’s grabbing Dream and Sykunno. Tommy throws himself up into the air, red wings flapping.

Without Dream stabilising the ground, the avalanche floods forward. Tommy is barely up in the air before the snow is gaining on him.

Prisoners and guards scream and charge in and Tommy watches as in minutes, snow engulfs the facility.

Approaching the aircraft, Dream holds out a hand and Tommy latches on, wings pressing against his back so that he can tumble gracefully inside.

George has taken up piloting while Corpse sits beside Alexei. Tommy makes eye contact and Corpse nods.

“Great.” Tommy says, sitting opposite him. “You’re going to tell us everything and then I’m going to shoot you and shove your body in the ocean.”

Somewhere in the Caribbean, Tina looks over at Leslie while Brooke laughs at something the mark - Doctor Kudrin’s bodyguard enjoying his vacation - says. “How do you think the others are coping?”

It never fails to be funny when men and women of the Red Room fall for the tricks they trained their agents to possess.

Leslie nearly chokes on her drink. “Knowing Minx and Sean paired together, somethings probably already on fire. Corpse hasn’t pulled at our connection though so I doubt anyones dead.”

Tina giggles. Brooke makes her move, head tilting back, blonde hair flicking over one shoulder as she turns, shirt swirling around her thighs. The mark follows her with his gaze, and is quick to rise when she lures him away from his bodyguards.

“I’m so glad we picked the stakeout.” Tina murmurs and Leslie throws her head back and laughs. They both turn back to the sun on their faces.

In L’Manberg, Niko Constantin rolls his shoulders and walks into the lion’s den. He smiles at the three men before him, noting scars, noting sharp eyes and sharper smiles.

A lion’s den, yes.

But Niko has never been scared of a couple of wild beasts.

After all, he’s a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

“You’re here to tell us about Niko Constantin?” Odin asks, black wings twitching behind him.

Niko keeps his smile calm. Better to hide sharp canines and pretend to be the sheep. “Yes,” he replies. “It’s a pleasure to meet you all. I feel like we’re going to have a great time together.”

Chapter End Notes

Hello Alexei! I wonder what he knows...

Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

Hiya guys!

(As you can see, the chapter count is going up, shhhhhhhhhh)

TW// murder, blood, gore, body horror, dream sequence depicting amputation, graphic detail of injury, weaponry, past brainwashing, past child abuse, brief mention of child death, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“So, little Dan, what do you want to talk about?” Alexei starts, keeping that intense look on Tommy before surveying the others. His eyes skip George - all of them try to hide the smirks at that - linger on Corpse’s scars, and finally settle on Tubbo. “Jordan’s kid, right? You look so much like your mother.”

Tubbo tenses. Ranboo tenses in response. Tommy narrows his eyes but Corpse beats him to it. “Who is his mother?”

“Don’t know,” Alexei replies with a shrug. “They just gave me a photo and told me to make it messy.”

“What?” Tubbo hisses out, voice terribly small. Tommy almost tells Corpse to keep Alexei quiet. He knows what Alexei is referring to.

He’s been sent on missions like that before. Kills are nothing more than consequences, used to deter others.

His mind briefly shows him the memory of young Sveta and her missing finger. He shakes it away, gritting his teeth.

“Didn’t know Huntsman Spiders could fall in love, not with all of the conditioning you go through.”

“You’re saying you didn’t have to?” George asks, plainly, easily redirecting the conversation. “Be conditioned, that is.”

“I’m a soldier, not a spy.” Alexei responds, seeming to see George but not. It’s always funny to watch outsiders look at George and see nothing but his soft smile, never the dangerous killer underneath.

Sure, they're all dangerous here. Dream, Sykunno and Sapnap have strong abilities but people dismiss Sykunno easily too. Looking at them objectively, despite knowing who they are, Alexei is only seeing a couple of boys and adults that aren't worth his fear.

Rae and Minx would love him. They both thrive off being underestimated and then turning on their more sadistic tendencies.

"That much is obvious," George replies, drily and Dream snorts while Sapnap tries to cough to mask his laugh.

Alexei's eyes narrow but Corpse must pull at some thread because his expression lightens again.

"Where is Madame B.?" Tommy asks, cutting to the chase.

"No idea." Alexei responds. "I know she owns a small apartment in Volgograd somewhere but you'd have to ask around."

"What do you know about her?"

"No abilities but impressively smart. She's like a pit viper, that one. Don't let the grandma look fool you, she'd burn the world down if it meant she could be warm." Alexei leans forward as if sharing a secret. "She killed her own daughter. Put her through the program as a Widow. Had so much potential, you should know, you share her blood."

And just like that, it's as if Sykunno has called upon his ice as the entire aircraft's temperature drops.

"What?" Dream breathes.

"After Jordan starting meeting up with his love outside, and I was sent to stop it, Madame had fears about her daughter. I was sent to look over things and guess what I found? Dan and her were planning on taking little you away, just like Jordan did." Alexei snorts. "Lizzie tipped them off that I was coming. She held a grudge from when I suggested Maksim be her kid's Handler. That girl needed a strong hand--"

Tommy doesn't know who moves first.

All he knows is that he finds himself flat on his stomach, wings pinned as Dream sits on him, Sapnap gripping the back of his wings while Corpse brushes his fingers over both Tubbo and Ranboo.

"Oooo, it seems--"

"Shut up." Corpse snaps and Alexei's eyes fall dead.

Tommy struggles fruitlessly. The pressure on his wings makes his brain turn to mush and the minute Sapnap starts to pet the smaller feathers closer to his spine, he falls still and silent.

“I always forget he has an off switch,” George mutters and Tommy is too busy enjoying the feeling of warm hands on his feathers to snap back.

“Baby bird,” Sykunno mutters and Dream lets out a tea-kettle wheeze.

“You seem to have a lot of power in the Red Room,” Corpse says to Alexei. “How’d you end up in that shithole?”

“I wanted the glory I had in Soviet times,” Alexei admits. “They made me into a glorified trainer. I wanted more because I was more. So I turned on them and ended up there.”

“What’s your connection to Niko Constantin?” Sapnap asks.

“We share the same body enhancing serum Doctor Kudrin came up with before Clara showed up with her own version of a graduating ceremony.” Alexei shrugs, looking contemplative. “They’d already turned on him, locked him in the gulag, when I showed up.”

“Do you know-“ Sykunno starts but Alexei interrupts.

“Oh, Constantin is more than a man. He’s a wild beast.” Alexei studies them all. “They made you all into killers but they bent you. Madame’s old saying of all of you agents being marble? She got it from him. Constantin wasn’t marble. He didn’t bend, he broke. They shattered his mind, turned him feral. But that isn’t the problem with him. It’s that he’s still fucking smart. You could drop him in the desert with nothing but the clothes on his back and he’d walk out as a king.”

They are words of a man who values strength over everything but it’s the honest truth. Or at least, his honest truth.

Despite half of his brain drifting away, Tommy knows that Niko Constantin is going to be a problem.

“What are his abilities?” George asks.

“The usual enhancers we all have but there’s something else. Not that I know. Constantin never said but...” Alexei shudders. “There’s a reason he was never allowed near the Department’s officials.”

Concerning. Very concerning. That means if they encounter him, they’ll be doing it blindly, with no idea what other power he possesses.

Tommy is the best bet. He’s immune to mental abilities and he’s a God, physical powers won’t effect him too much.

“Who is currently running the Department?” Dream asks. It’s their final question.

“Last I heard, Dreykov was running the show.” Alexei says, running a hand through his beard. “He was waiting for Clara’s fall considering when she showed up, he lost his role in the Red Room.”

“He’s like Madame, isn’t he?” George clarifies. “He’s getting enhanced to live longer.”

Alexei nods. “He’s getting older though. He needs a boost or he’ll be dead before the next election.” He turns to look at Tommy’s prone form. “You’re the one who killed Clara right? I’d say Dreykov would be looking for you and your blood.”

Tommy let’s out a low trill and Alexei snorts.

No one is getting his blood. Tommy is ending the Department and that means killing all of them.

“Is that everything?” Corpse asks.

“I think so.” George replies. “Let them all go at once. I’m betting on Ranboo.”

“Tubbo.” Sapnap says. “His look of pure anger? Sold it for me.”

“I can’t believe you don’t trust our little brother to commit murder.” Dream mutters.

They all seem to look at Sykunno and Corpse. “Considering I have two minds right now, I decline the offer to bet,” Corpse says, amused.

“I’m not betting on murder! That’s mean.”

“Sykunno, I’ve seen you murder multiple men with that cute grin of yours.” Corpse replies and Sykunno ducks his head.

“Corpse,” he whines and Dreams laughs, stands up.

“Sykunno won’t bet. Let them go.”

Tommy blames it on how nice it feels to have his wings preened by Sapnap’s warm hands. That’s why it takes him a moment to orient himself when Sapnap gets up.

And by the time he does find himself on his feet, Alexei is clutching at his throat, collapsing to his knees as blood rushes over thick fingers and down, staining his white prison shirt.

Tommy lifts his gaze, openly gaping. “Ranboo?” He breathes, shocked.

Ranboo keeps his eyes firmly on Alexei as he bleeds to death, knuckles white where they grip the dagger in his hand. “For our parents and for Niki.”

Watching Alexei keel over is satisfying. It would be more so if Tommy wasn’t surprised by Ranboo’s efficiency.

“I could’ve done it,” he says, lightly. He’s been a murderer for a long time, another joining his ledger of red is fine by him if it means Ranboo doesn’t have to live with the consequences of his actions.

Ranboo still doesn't look away. "I had to." He says, quietly. "I have to know what I'm capable of."

The older agents all raise their eyebrows. Tubbo steps closer, laptop forgotten as he lays a hand on Ranboo's arm before slowly taking his hand and threading their fingers together, his wings flutter softly. Tommy gently takes the knife from him, spattered in Alexei's blood and wipes it on his own gear. He slowly slides the knife back into its place in Ranboo's thigh holster. His wings spread out, covering his friends.

Tommy looks at Ranboo and feels his heart hurt.

Sure, he made a choice. He choose to kill Alexei.

But Tommy can't help but think that no matter how short someone's time with the Red Room is, it's claws are in too deep. It never really leaves them.

Niko smiles at the men. "I've heard you want the Department gone?"

He thinks it's annoying that they don't look concerned by his presence. It's surprising considering Odin supposedly has all of the younger agents working for him.

Surely they should all be uneasy at a random man with a clear Russian accent telling them information they desperately need.

Unless it's pure cockiness. These men have survived the gang after them, Pandora's Vault and the Red Room. Maybe they've grown complacent in their own ability to not die.

"I may be a bad man," Odin starts. "But getting kids to fight and kill each other? Human experimentation? Human trafficking? Yeah, we don't do that shit here."

Niko tilts his head. "What about the shipment a couple of months back? Supposedly a vigilante found them and reported them."

"A gang from the outskirts of L'Manberg," Loki speaks, voice as soft as honey. "They'd been trying to make a move for awhile."

"They've been taken care of." Tyr adds, pushing a few pink strands falling from the bun on his head behind his ear.

"You seem to know a lot about L'Manberg, mate." Odin says and it's not an accusation, men like him in this type of business don't accuse but Niko knows he's finally sensing that something isn't quite right.

The wolf inside of him grins. On the outside he continues to keep the relaxed air about him.

"I always check the area I'm going to," he replies. "Better to be safe than sorry."

Niko was trained like the other agents: he needed to be able to fit in anywhere, to know as many languages and accents as he could, to exist without attention being drawn to him. But unlike the Widows who were trained in subtlety, Niko was trained to fight, to be bloodthirsty. His missions always involved killing someone, normally in a very messy way.

And much like a rabid wolf, Niko grew drawn to blood. He revelled in his violent nature, he let it consume him.

He can feel the wolf now, itching for a chance to rip and tear flesh.

Niko can be patient. He's been trained to be. But after years alone in the isolation chamber, after years spent at that gulag, fighting anyone who so much as looked at him until they all gave him a wide berth, has left him holding his sanity by a thin thread.

He wants to kill the other Huntsman Spiders.

But first, he needs to leave them a message.

After all, Theseus has been spotted with these three, and he's the one that stole Niko's mission in life. He took down Eret and the woman.

So Niko is going to take something from him.

He pulls at his power, feels the ache settle in his bones. It's a strong power, a dangerous one, but if he uses it to much, it starts to eat away at him.

Not that he minds. When the bloodlust settles in, the pain will be easily forgotten.

He smiles then, a wolf-like grin. "You wanted to know about Niko Constantin, yes?" He throws his arm wide, watches the realisation hit before his power snatches their minds. "It's lovely to meet you all."

Somewhere in the snow, Alexei Shostakov's body burns to dust, to nothingness. He is not a man that will be mourned.

It's quiet when the aircraft touches down and they walk through Leslie's portal. Tommy allows his wings to remain out when he sees how calm Ranboo looks when he starts to preen the larger primary feathers. It's a little awkward; Tommy is funny about his wings in ways Phil isn't, but after Eryn's appearance, the others realise what causes it.

Tommy isn't an avian by blood.

He stole these wings from a boy who was his friend in a place where friendship led to death.

Tommy wishes Eryn didn't have to die. He wishes he could've got Eryn out too. He wishes he wasn't the one to pull the trigger.

But a smaller part of him is happy to have a piece of Eryn with him. His first friend. His red wings.

But Ranboo doesn't look to be going into shock any time soon and so Tommy allows the gentle touch.

When they walk into the Tartu apartment Tina has, Tommy pushes Tubbo towards the living room, wings flapping to nudge Ranboo to follow. Behind him, he can hear Corpse telling the others what happened in quiet Arabic.

Niki immediately walks closer dropping to a crouch in front of Ranboo, turning to briefly look at Tubbo and then Tommy. "What do you need?"

"I'm fine." Ranboo says, shortly. Niki frowns, she pats his knee.

"You don't have to be." She reminds him, quietly. "No one here is going to judge you if you need a minute or a breakdown."

"He deserved it," Ranboo murmurs.

"Doesn't mean you have to feel okay about it." She says. "Killing someone is always a strange experience."

"Even for you?" Tubbo asks, a little bluntly. Niki laughs, smiles at him.

"Yeah. I don't- some of them, the bad people I kill, deserved to die and so I don't feel guilty for what I did. But the others I hurt, they stay with me. It hurts, sometimes." She gestures to where Sean is methodically checking over his array of weaponry, ignoring Tina as she tries to remove the knives from her dining table. "We've all grown accustomed to it and even the craziest of us are still affected by death. It means we're not psychopaths, at the very least."

Ranboo tips forward and Niki rises to meet him. There, they sit, with Niki kneeling and Ranboo hunched over her, as she pats his back, runs red nails through his black and white hair. Tommy leans back, let's Tubbo push back into his space, wings meeting: Tubbo's wire-thin and Tommy's blood red.

Rae ends up cooking dinner with Dream. No one comments on the domestic sight. No one wishes to burst the quiet bubble they've created.

They wait until late evening, nearly morning, when Ranboo and Tubbo are asleep to discuss what they know.

Brooke tells them that Doctor Kudrin's bodyguard gave her an address.

Sean mentions that the government facility has some notes on them but not much. It's as if Niko Constantin is a ghost story and the Doctor, Professor and Madame are nobody important.

"General Dreykov was mentioned a lot, though." Rae says, braiding her hair with Leslie's help. "He was a politician in Soviet times and then disappears for a long time. His son seems

to be taking over his roles but I'm not so sure."

"This serum shit again?" Corpse asks. "Constantin, Alexei and now Dreykov?"

"Madame also has it," George adds.

"I feel like I've heard of that Doctor before," Sean says, head hanging off the couch, body upside down. "Like from the Beast Labs."

"I mean it makes sense," Minx says. "They'd need something to keep the Widows young before the woman took over the Room. And you can't die, taking your blood would be helpful."

They all then turn to Tommy. He rolls his eyes. "Yeah, fuckers, I know they're going to want me because of the whole God thing."

"I'm more concerned about this Professor," Brooke says, painting her nails a soft pale blue. "There's nothing about him. Whatsoever. The most we could find was that he conditioned the Widows. That's it. No marriage certificate, no children, no house in his name. Nothing."

"It's all fucked," Tommy groans and pushes at Corpse, climbs over Sean and nearly elbows Dream in the face so that he can cuddle up next to Sapnap. "Now hush. I need sleep."

"Baby bird has decreed bedtime," George mutters and Minx laughs so hard she ends up snorting water out of nose as Niki slaps her on the back.

Tommy opens his mouth to snap back only for Sapnap's warm hand to settle in his coverts. He chirps instead. Sean and Tina immediately start cooing and Tommy only has the energy to flip them off before he nestles closer to the warmth and sleeps.

When Phil opens his eyes, he's standing in his cell in Pandora's Vault. There's a strange burning sensation at his shoulder blades, like salt being rubbed into a cut. He swallows his panic at being here again and tilts his head. His breath gets lodged in his throat. Blood drips onto the floor below, the puddle surrounded by black feathers. Only the base of his wings remain.

When Techno opens his eyes, he's lying down in his cell in Pandora's Vault. He tries to move, to twitch. Nothing happens. He's frozen in place, still as if paralysed. Fear and dread pool in his stomach and he can feel the way his mind starts to crack. He takes deep, shuddering breaths. He can't hear it, can't feel it. He thinks he's started to scream.

When Wilbur opens his eyes, he's sitting in his cell in Pandora's Vault. Fundy lays before him, chest rising and falling unsteadily. Wilbur rushes to his side, opens his mouth to scream only to find his lips once again have been sewn together. He sobs as he lifts Fundy's head, fingers pressing into a pale neck, feeling a barely-there pulse. Without thinking, he starts chest compressions, tears sliding from his face onto Fundy's.

When Niko opens his eyes, the infamous Syndicate have fallen catatonic, eyes rolled back into their skulls as they're forced to relive their nightmares.

He walks over to Odin, slips his hand into his pocket and grabs his phone, neatly dodging a flapping, panicked wing. He holds the phone up to his face, watching it click open and turns to his contacts.

Scrolling through, he switches apps to his photos and grins wolfishly at the sight.

In the latest photo, three boys are asleep on a couch. A soft, blue blanket is thrown over them along with giant red wings, sprouting from the blond boy's back. He's holding a stuffed cow teddy under his chin and a cat is curled on the shoulder of the black and white haired boy. The other boy, smaller with antennae and thin wings, is hogging most of the blanket.

It's a sweet photo but Niko is quick to dismiss his emotions over it. Those boys escaped the Red Room, and the blond one destroyed it.

"Hello, Theseus," Niko mutters at the phone. "I can't wait to meet you."

Chapter End Notes

Hehehehehehe one down a couple more to go ;)

Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

Heya lads!

TW// mention of medical experiments, mention of vivisection (it doesn't happen), blood, injury, graphic description of injury, brainwashing, mention of child abuse, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Are you sure they’re in Estonia?” Sean asks, bouncing on his toes, rocking back on his heels. “Why Estonia? Why not stay in fucking Russia?”

“We’re near Russia, dickhead,” Minx mutters with a scowl.

Tommy rolls his eyes as they continue to bicker. They had decided to go as a team instead of individually scouting the place. Especially as the last time they tried to handle things by themselves, they ended up under Billiam’s control.

Ranboo is still quiet but he ate this morning and slept for a full night. Niki has been trying to disguise her hovering. It’s a little funny but mostly eye opening to how much they’ve changed.

Twenty-eight children to whatever the hell they are now. Not quite assassins but not quite over who they used to be. More human than spider.

“Tommy,” Tubbo speaks, wings fluttering behind him.

“Yeah, big man?”

“What are you going to do when this is all over?” It’s a question that has Tommy pausing for longer than he’d like. Tubbo continues in the silence, “Are you going to work as the Syndicate’s bodyguard again?”

Tommy doesn’t know.

He hasn’t really thought about the after.

If he’s being honest with himself, this life has not been good to him. He doesn’t enjoy what he does, even if there’s a hint of satisfaction every time one of the Department members dies.

But he's good at it. This life is all he's ever known. Killing and fighting and surviving is in his blood. Blood he supposedly shares with Madame B..

"I don't think I can have normal." He replies, slowly. "I always assumed I'd die doing this."

He touches the small strands of white in the front of his hair; white strands he shares with Tubbo (it's barely noticeable), Ranboo (half of his hair is dyed white anyway) and Wilbur (he wears it like a badge of honour).

"I think I want to be a Hero." Tubbo says, quietly. "Working with Puffy should be interesting. I'm not really cut out for this murder shit. Maybe... Maybe I'll go work in Pandora's Vault. Make sure it's a good prison. Plus, I'll get to see Sam."

Tommy hums, doesn't respond. It sounds like a plan, a good one. Tommy hasn't spoken to Sam since the hospital. He knows it's not Sam's fault Phil, Techno and Wilbur were arrested and imprisoned but the anger over that whole situation still burns in his lungs.

Killing the Warden felt good but at the end of the day, good man or not, Tommy killed Sam's brother.

He's seen it before, on missions, when a family member found the body of one of his victims. Their screams and sobs keep him awake at night. The worst memories are the begging: for help, for God to save their dead child, for someone to laugh it off and say it's a joke.

Those were the moments that solidified Tommy as a monster.

"I think," he speaks before his mind can catch up and stop the words, "I want a break. Like a couple of months of just working out who the fuck I am. Maybe get a part time job in Niki's bakery."

Tommy doesn't want to be a monster anymore.

Maybe he should return to his nightly patrols as Theseus. Those used to clear his mind.

"That sounds nice." Ranboo says, quietly. "A few months of peace and quiet."

It does sound nice.

Tommy wants to experience it.

Puffy raises her eyebrows at Grian as he shifts from one foot to the other and back again. His wings curl tight against his back to spanning open, feathers rustling.

"What's wrong?" She asks. She hadn't expected a phone call, least of all from Grian. She hadn't expected him to show up at the Heroes Tower either and demand she takes him to the Badlands.

“Somethings up with Phil.” Grian says. When she raises her eyebrows, he shrugs. “Instincts. He’s also not answering his phone.”

“You and Phil have regular phone chats, huh?” She asks, amused and Grian rolls his eyes, even as he flushes.

“It’s nice talking to another avian- look! Somethings wrong and I trust you.” He gestures to the empty warehouse park they’re in. “I can’t contact any of the agents because they don’t believe in phones, so…”

Puffy smiles at him. “I’ll help. Let’s go see what’s wrong with Phil.”

As they walk into the Syndicate’s base, passing guards and reinforced doors. Once they hit the lobby, nothing seems blatantly worrying. Under their feet, Anchor the shark approaches before swimming away.

The receptionist is filing her nails as a few of Phil’s men walk around, talking in hushed tones.

“Hey,” Puffy greets the receptionist. “Can you point me in the direction of Odin?”

“Captain!” The woman startles, straightens in her seat, nail file dropping to the desk. “Hello! Um, Odin and the others are in a meeting right now.”

“With who?” Grian asks and the receptionist starts typing, scrolling before pausing.

“One of Quackity’s clients.” She informs them. “He didn’t leave a name. Why? Is everything okay?”

Grian’s wings rustle again but Puffy keeps the same calm expression. “We’re just checking up on him,” she replies. “Do you know which room they’re in?”

“The main conference one.” The receptionist says before listing off directions.

Puffy grins at her. “Thank you.”

Together, they make their way towards the conference room.

Neither of them take note of a man rounding the corner with reddish brown hair and dark eyes. They don’t notice the gun in his waistband, or the set of knives in his boots. They don’t pick up on the sweat beading at his forehead as his power creates a strain on his body.

They pass him by, continuing on their walk.

By the time they open the door to find the three leaders of the Syndicate passed out on the floor, shaking and bleeding from the nose, the man has already left.

Tommy really should start realising their plans always fail. He shouldn't have hope that they won't.

But he does.

And maybe it's because he's concerned for Ranboo, maybe it's because he's still reeling from his conversation with Tubbo, maybe he's just not at the top of his game.

Either way, Tommy isn't paying enough attention.

None of them are.

They've found the art gallery where Doctor Lyudmila Kudrin has been seen entering and exiting every Sunday for months. She leaves for Sunday Mass and then returns before five o'clock.

They're expecting the crowds, the noise, the art.

They're not expecting the wire-thin women with eyes like ice and smiles as sharp as blades. They're not expecting the sudden fire alarm, the immediate attack.

It all goes wrong quickly after that.

Especially when they're backed into one room and a man walks out. He has stark white hair and a small white beard. Notably, he flinches at the sight of them, hands permanently shaking.

"Welcome!" He greets, in Russian, voice high-pitched. "Bohdana said you'd all be joining us!"

Tommy immediately doesn't like him. He's too nervous, fidgety, eyeing them up like lab rats. Tommy knows a scientist when he sees one.

None of them reply. All too wary of the precarious situation they're in.

Dream subtly flexes his hand. The ground doesn't move, doesn't even twitch. They all tense but the man smiles. Something is really wrong, and Tommy's vision starts to swim. He feels hot and cold all over.

"Oh! I haven't introduced myself, have I? I'm Professor Grigor Pchelintsov. Soon, you'll be meeting Doctor Kudrin--"

Tubbo collapses. It's only Tommy's quick reflexes that stop Tubbo's head smashing into the polished wooden floor.

"Tubbo?" He hisses even as he feels the urge to lay down next to Tubbo and sleep.

"How interesting," Professor Pchelintsov murmurs. "I suppose it's the bee physiology, yes?"

"Gas," Ranboo hisses but it's too late.

Even if they were to cover their faces, they've been inhaling it since they've been standing here.

A few of them, the ones now crowding around Tommy and Tubbo like a shield, lunge forward. The women standing at the only exit easily knock them down. They're quick and efficient, highly skilled.

Tommy sways as he stands, putting himself between the women - they must be Black Widows, they're too skilled not to be - Ranboo, who also ends up collapsing, and an unconscious Tubbo.

In less than a minute, most of them are on the floor and unconscious. Sean is like Tommy, alert but unsteady. He's managed to cut one of the Widows and seems proud of it.

The Professor looks ecstatic. "Both of you have shown extreme enhanced healing," he mutters, eyes darting between the two of them. "I assume the reports that one of you is a God wasn't an exaggeration."

"Fuck you," Tommy spits and the Professor laughs, hands clapping in front of him.

"Oh, I know you Theseus. You don't remember me, do you? Your abilities are so strong, you're able to fight even my mental capabilities off." The smile the Professor gives Tommy makes him shudder. "You must be the God, then, unless Weapon X has been busy."

"Bite me, asshole." Sean snarls. He steps forward and Tommy watches while half of his brain melts as two of the women grab at Sean and flip him. It takes three solid kicks to the head to have him semi-unconscious. His fingers still twitch as he groans.

"How isn't the gas affecting you?" Tommy asks, trying to delay the inevitable.

"There's an antidote." The Professor replies. "Now, are you going to come quietly to meet Doctor Kudrin - she's going to enjoy meeting you - or will we need to get violent?"

Tommy bares his teeth. "You're all the same, you know? Fucking cowards. When it comes down to it, you're all fucking cowards because we both know if I fought you, even in this state, I'd fucking win."

The Professor sighs, looks to one of the women. "Let's hurry this up. I'm sure Bohdana is going to enjoy this."

Tommy blinks and there is a woman there. He's drugged from the gas and it takes a surprisingly short amount of time for him to end up flipped, flat on his back as he's punched unconscious.

Karl doesn't dream.

Not anymore. Not with his new mind conjuring images of the potential future every time he blinks.

Some timelines are similar. Some incredibly different.

Most of the time, Karl can push the images away. He focuses on the present, on hugging Sapnap and sprawling across Quackity. He contemplates working for Puffy again, being a Hero that L'Manberg needs.

Most of the time, he can pretend what happened to him doesn't affect him.

He still thinks of Jimmy, Chris and Chandler. He remembers conversations, remembers enjoying their company. But he also remembers how quickly they shifted from friends to enemies.

They altered his brain.

And now Karl has to live with it.

Which is why he's not surprised to wake to images of a rapidly spiralling future. He sees so much blood, a flash of gold, hears screams and then it disappears. Taking its place is a light room, soft breaths and murmuring, a single gunshot shattering glass.

Karl tries to work out whose future he's watching.

It's blurry. Not yet concrete.

Then it shifts. He sees a man with reddish-brown hair and eyes like a caged animal.

Karl wonders if he should let the future play out. Would it be kinder?

He shakes his head, grabs his phone and calls Quackity.

"Karl, you should be resting." Quackity speaks the second the line connects.

Karl rolls his eyes, pulls on one of Sapnap's sweaters. "Your latest client? The one you sent to the Syndicate?"

"What about him?"

Karl shoves his feet in his shoes. "I'm marrying a dumb man." He ignores the hiss of disagreement. "He's Niko Constantin. You sent a Wolf Spider straight to the Syndicate's doorstep."

Tommy wakes up in- well. Tommy doesn't quite know. The room is dark and his head aches and his bones ache and he thinks he might vomit. He's cold, too, but he's sweating.

It's more than a little concerning, especially because Tommy can't remember how he ended up here. Wherever here is.

Slowly, he turns his head, ignoring the way his vision swims, and tries to locate a door or window.

He finds out that he's strapped to a bed, in the corner of an all white room. There's a toilet and a sink in the far corner, a desk and a chair further down the wall and beside the chair sits a door. There aren't any windows but Tommy spots the hidden camera in the corner of the ceiling rather easily.

Groggily, Tommy dislocates his thumb and tugs his hand out of the restraints. He pops it back into place and starts on the other restraints, ignoring the banging in his skull.

He takes a few deep breathes before pushing himself up and nearly ends up throwing up. Nausea rolls through him and he slams his eyes closed as his vision floods with black spots.

He keeps himself as relaxed as possible, focusing on calming his rapid heart rate. He opens his eyes slowly and studies what he's wearing in the brief light spilling in from under the door.

He's still got his Huntsman gear on, apart from the jacket. Tommy checks himself, finds that all of his weapons have been taken but he can't pinpoint an injury that would be causing his body this much stress.

That's until he looks down at his arms, which ache and cramp and are filled with pins and needles.

There, in the crease of his elbow, is a giant bruise.

He remembers a far-away memory, of a time when he was young but not a child, never a child, and he'd spent a few weeks with the many doctors of the Room. The Room constantly wanted updates on their physical performance and Tommy had learnt that it was easier to sit there and let them do what they wanted.

They've taken his blood.

Tommy can remember the symptoms. He knows what to look for when it comes to blood loss. The Room covered that, too, in their training.

"Fuck," he hisses.

Seconds later, he passes out.

Tubbo does not like this situation at all. He'll admit: he's scared and panicked and utterly exhausted.

For the last couple of days - he assumes it's been days, he can't be sure, there are no windows, no clocks, no way to tell - he's been in and out of consciousness. Occasionally he wakes to find a blonde woman fussing over his blood tests. Sometimes, he's lying on a cold,

metal table, and the man who welcomed them is touching his temples, making his brain burn and fall blissfully quiet.

But as the days continue, he starts to become more lucid. They don't see him as a threat. He's not trained like the agents, and has no desire to kill.

In all honesty, Tubbo thinks they don't know what to do with him.

They can't kill him. The last time someone tried, Tommy decided to go full God mode.

But he also has no reason to be here. He's just a boy with big eyes and bee's wings. They seem to be forgetting even the soft bumblebees have stingers.

So Tubbo waits.

He's grown up with a crime boss as his father and one of his best friends is an assassin. Tubbo knows how to survive in these situations and if he can't fight, then he must bide his time for an opening.

An opening presents itself when Tubbo realises he's been stuck in the same dorm room. There are multiple beds - he doesn't have to count to know there will be twenty-eight - and a shower room next to it. There's another door that's always locked and whilst Tubbo knows how to pick locks, he decides to wait.

And so, two days later - a woman unlocks the door three times a day to give him a meal - he leaves the shower room, hair still wet, to find Ranboo sitting on a bed. His eyes are glassy and there's a rapidly healing bruise on his jaw.

"Hey," Tubbo greets, keeping his distance like Tommy told them to do if he were to be triggered again, voice loud. Ranboo blinks up at him. There's no recognition in his eyes. It reminds Tubbo of those days in the Beast Labs. "Do you know who I am, Ranboo?"

After a moment of studying him, Ranboo nods. His eyes clear. "Tubbo," he says, even if it sounds more like a question than a statement.

"Yep, bossman. How are you?"

"Fuzzy." Ranboo replies. "I keep... I think I'm forgetting things."

"Yeah?" Tubbo pushes, stepping closer.

"Am I a ballet dancer?" Ranboo asks, quietly. Tubbo notes the Russian accent spilling over his words. "For the Bolshoi?"

Tubbo resists the urge to panic. Ranboo needs him calm. Whoever has them underestimates Tubbo, underestimates how intelligent he is. He can work with this if he can keep calm.

"No," Tubbo says, softly but firmly. "You're my best friend, my brother. Phil is our dad. Do you remember him? He has really big wings."

Ranboo blinks, frowns. "I don't- I'm sorry."

Tubbo shakes his head, sits opposite Ranboo and reaches for his hand. Ranboo grips it back with surprising strength.

"Don't be sorry," Tubbo says. "I can tell you about him. But first, can you tell me why you think you work for the Bolshoi?"

"In all of my memories, I'm dancing." Ranboo admits. "Every time I think of something else, it hurts. I get these... flashes." When he lifts his head and meets Tubbo's eyes, Tubbo can't stop the gasp when Ranboo whispers, "I don't know what's real and what's not, anymore."

The next time Tommy opens his eyes, he's strapped to a chair and his body once again aches.

He lifts his head from his chest, taking note of his Huntsman gear, the well-worn straps around his wrists, chest, and legs. He's in another white room, larger than the last. There's light this time, the fluorescents burn his eyes.

There's a needle in his arm, attached to a rapidly filling bag. Tommy stares at the crimson liquid, at the gold spotted throughout.

"Good morning, Theseus." An older woman with a blonde bob and red stilettos greets. She's wearing an all white suit. "How are you feeling?"

"Like shit," Tommy breathes, head spinning.

The woman tuts. "Now, now. No need to be crude."

"Coming from the fucking vampire." Tommy spits.

"I prefer Doctor Kudrin. Or Lyudmila." The woman says, looking at him with dark grey eyes.

"I don't give a shit."

She tilts her head, grabs a chair from the desk against the wall, filled with papers, next to a table filled with medical supplies. She places the chair in front of Tommy and sits down.

"You will." She says. "You're a Huntsman Spider, Theseus. I've met many agents like you. I know how you act, how you survive. What would your trainers, your Handler be telling you to do in this situation?"

Tommy ignores the mention of his Handler. He'd rather not think of that man at all even though his memories of him are strained and weak at best.

He narrows his eyes. His blood continues to fill the bag. "Gather information," he mutters after a long minute of staring.

She smiles, as if proud. He refuses to acknowledge the way his mind reacts to that, latching onto the subtle praise like a dog begging for a bone. He has to remind himself that he doesn't need it. Tommy has family and friends he can rely on. He doesn't need this second-hand attention from someone who will use it against him.

"So, will you listen?"

"Do I have a choice?" Tommy asks, drily. Doctor Kudrin frowns. Waits. Tommy watches her and then sighs. "Go on," he says.

"I'm a biochemist and after World War One, a woman - Bohdana - approached me. The world was changing, she said, and we had to change with it." She throws one leg over the other. The bottom of her heels are blood red. "She told me she worked for the Soviet Special Forces, told me I could be making double the money I was being paid as a teacher--"

"Ah," Tommy breathes.

She pauses her story. "Yes?"

"The money." Tommy comments. "Who cares about dying children when you can make a shit-ton of money."

She frowns. He's displeased her. Tommy ignores the way his brain shudders at the thought.

"I wanted to make a difference." She says, calmly. "No one wanted war but we knew it was coming. The Soviet Union was a powerful nation and we needed to fight for it, defend our motherland by any means necessary. That includes blood, sweat and tears."

"Even of children?" Tommy asks.

"We needed soldiers--"

"We were children!" Tommy screams, shaking in the chair he's strapped to, eyes blurring with tears. "We weren't fucking soldiers, we were just children!"

"You were never just children," she replies, hauntingly.

Tommy gasps as he tries to breathe through the urge to cry. He doesn't want to be here. He doesn't want to do this. He hurts and he doesn't know where the others are and he wants Phil, he wants Phil to tell him everything is going to be okay. He wants Wilbur to hug him and Techno to tell him that he can survive this.

He wants his family.

Doctor Kudrin stands. She walks over and fusses with the bag of blood, switching it out for an empty one.

"Department X created the Black Widow Ops Program as an espionage training program. The Red Room was based in Belarus, and we used the facility to train the deadliest female assassin." She sits down again, gestures to him. "As you can see, that objective changed."

Tommy doesn't respond. His body is heavy, his mind heavier. He blinks at her.

"The Department tried to include male assassins. The Wolf Spider Program fell through, however, when the only survivor became uncontrollable and unstable. Clara changed that. She wanted to try again. Sky proved it could be done and the Huntsman Spiders were created."

The history lesson is interesting but Tommy thinks he's close to passing out or vomiting.

"And this is where everything started to fall apart." Doctor Kudrin continues, ignorant or maybe indifferent to Tommy's suffering. "My role was to enhance the Black Widows. I created a serum to slow the ageing process, and to boost the immune cell repair systems within the body. My invention was revolutionary and then- then Clara showed up. Why use my serum when she could bleed her godliness into you?"

Tommy's eyes begin to droop.

His blood pours into the bag.

"Did you know that my serum didn't kill the agents?" She laughs. "Clara didn't care if you died. She saw it as a game of whether you were worthy or not."

She stands, steps closer.

Red fingernails grip his chin, lift his head from where it's started to drop to his chest.

He meets dark grey eyes.

"With your blood, I can make the other Widows stronger." She leans in. "My serum slows the ageing process but Clara changed your DNA. You reach maturity and everything stops. You will never get grey hairs, Theseus. You will never feel age in your joints. You'll be stuck like this, for forever."

Tommy blinks at her.

He knows. They all do. Age is irrelevant to them.

Even though Niki worries for when Puffy can no longer slow the probability of her own ageing. Even though part of Sean's issues come from him watching the world change while he remains the same. Even though Corpse is aware that Ethan didn't graduate and so he will one day grow old and die.

"The God of Life," Doctor Kudrin breathes, "in the palm of my hand. The things I could discover. I'm using your blood to enhance the serum but when Bohdana is done with you, I'll start my experiments."

She may not say it but Tommy can see the intrigue in her eyes, the viciousness, the coldness. He wonders if she'll take samples or go straight to vivisection.

Tommy doesn't have the energy to fight back.

He wants to.

He wants to go home.

Instead, he closes his eyes and falls unconscious.

Chapter End Notes

Me, mentions Tommy's Handler who I've written about before but never really explained: they don't know, they don't know how crazy I am :)

Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

Hello lads!

TW// brainwashing, medical trauma, medical inaccuracies, past child abuse, child abuse mentioned, injury, blood, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy wakes to find himself strapped to a chair once again. He's in the same white room, with a needle in his arm and his blood pooling in a bag.

He lifts his head further and finds another blonde woman in the room with him. She's older than the Doctor, with wrinkles lining her eyes and mouth, but there's a regality to her, an aura of power she carries. She's wearing a royal blue pantsuit with white heels. Her blonde hair is tied into a tight bun and her eyes are an icy blue.

Tommy doesn't like the fact they share the same blue eyes, the same blond hair. He had hoped Alexei was lying.

"Hello, Madame B.." He speaks, words somewhat slurred. "Do you prefer Bohdana? Or maybe Grandma?"

Her nose wrinkles in disgust. "Madame is fine, Theseus."

"I prefer Tommy." He says, icy blue meeting icy blue. "Should I be impressed that I get to meet the big boss, or am I getting family privileges?"

"We may share blood but we are not family," she dismisses and Tommy dramatically gasps.

"Damn, Grandma. Right for the heart. How will I ever recover?"

Her eyes narrow. Tommy can feel half of his brain panic. The majority of his brain is too exhausted to care.

"Are you aware you're not the only one?" She asks instead of rising to his taunts. "Conceived and born in the Red Room?"

"Yeah, Ranboo and Niki were Lizzie's kids."

"So you're not aware of your brother?" Madame asks and Tommy jolts.

“What?” He hisses.

Madame waves a dismissive hand. “My daughter, your mother, only had you but your father had another child. He shared his father’s abilities but in an alternative way. The boy created a clone filled with spiders. I know Clara loved it when his power manifested.”

Tommy freezes. “You mean- You’re talking about Shroud. And Hive.”

Corpse is fascinated by Hive. A person he can’t control. Now Tommy knows why. Hive isn’t a person at all.

Madame shifts lightly on her feet. Tommy interprets it as a shrug. “The minute the boy was conceived, Dan was wiped. After the fiasco with you-“

“You killed your own daughter!” Tommy interrupts, fuming. How dare she talk about his parents like they’re nothing.

They were something.

They were important.

Even if Tommy never got to see his mother, even if he never got to spend much time with his father.

His mind can’t help but latch onto the fact he hasn’t spent much time with Shroud either.

“She was defective.” Madame replies, calmly. “Black Widows are not defective.”

Tommy wordlessly snarls.

“I’d hoped your Handler taught you some manners,” she says and Tommy refuses to flinch at the mention of that man.

“Oh yes, because beating a child is definitely going to make them compliant instead of filling them with pure fucking rage.” Tommy replies, snootily.

A single eyebrow raises. “You’re filled with rage?”

Tommy fits her a blank stare. “I’m killing every Department member because my personality is sunshine and rainbows. What the fuck do you think, Grandma?”

The minute flinch that name evokes makes all of it worth it, in Tommy’s humble opinion. If he has to suffer blood loss then Madame gets to suffer hearing their relation.

“Why was I never told about you?” Tommy carries on. “Like, I get it. The Room was always about cutting familial ties and shit but surely you wanted to see me? The woman definitely was all up in my business.”

Madame B. studies him for a long moment. “I wasn’t aware of how powerful you were. I had no attachment to a child that was destined to die.”

“Fucking hell, Grandma, hurt me less.” Tommy replies, sarcastically. “So you didn’t want a weak grandson?”

“I didn’t want a grandson.” Madame B. says, bluntly. “I created the Red Room because women are overlooked, undermined. Women make the perfect spies. Men are too loud, too uncontrollable, too emotional.”

“And yet here I am.” Tommy says.

“Yes,” she agrees. “Here you are. Do you know why?”

Tommy waves his hands around as much as he can with the restraints. “You want my blood because I killed the woman.”

Madame B. nods. Tommy refuses to acknowledge the Pavlovian behaviour of being happy about that. “I have thought it over and wish to offer a proposition to you. From what little footage I’ve discovered about you, you’re quite like Seven. You know him as George.”

“And?” Tommy asks.

“I don’t have to strap you down and bleed you dry.” Madame B. says, tilting her head. She looks demure like this and Tommy wonders how many people have fallen for it, how many people have died because of it. “If you work with us, you can get privileges. We’ll continue to take your blood but you’ll get to pick missions, pick partners. I’ll even entertain ideas about what to do with the other agents.”

Tommy pauses at that. “What do you mean other agents? What’s happening to them?”

“Currently the Widows are integrating with my Widows here at this facility. The Spiders are proving their worth.”

Tommy’s blood runs cold at that. “What the fuck do you mean proving their worth?”

“Have you heard about Niko Constantin?” She asks. Tommy nods. Her smile is sharp when she says, “After the Wolf Spiders, I put an end to trying to train male agents. They could be soldier but I would train perfection.”

“So you’re testing them?” Tommy questions. “What about Ranboo and Tubbo? They- They’re not trained like us, they would never-“

“Theseus.” She speaks and Tommy’s mouth slams shut. For a second, he’s still, bracing for a hit that never comes. “Killing those two boys is pointless when last time they came close, you proceeded to destroy everything Billiam fought for.”

“Self-preservation.” Tommy mutters and her lips twitch.

“Yes. And insurance. You won’t try anything if we have them.”

She’s not wrong. Tommy will always choose hurting himself if it means keeping them alive.

“I still don’t understand why you’re here.” He says, refusing to think about all the terrible things that could be happening to the others, to his brothers, to his friends.

She looks at him for a long time and then sighs. Approaching him, she unlocks the restraints from around his wrists and is oddly careful as she removes the needle from his arm. Stepping back and plucking some hand sanitiser from the desk drawer to clean her hands, she then nods when he looks to her, searchingly.

Slowly, as if waiting to make a wrong move, he unlocks the restraint around his chest and then ankles.

“I trust you to behave yourself.” Madame B. states and then steps away, rapping her knuckles on the door.

It opens and she turns her head to meet his eyes. Icy blue on icy blue. He stands, waiting for the fuzziness to ebb slightly before taking hesitant steps after her.

They leave the sterile room and enter a hallway. It reminds him of what the Belarus facility looked like. All dark wood and red hints, Soviet Supremacy in every piece of furniture, every colour choice.

They pass two guards on the door - muscular men with harsh stares and big chins - and down the hallway towards a large lobby. A big, elegant staircase sits in the corner and Tommy watches two girls, both looking to be fifteen or sixteen, climb the stairs. Each step is controlled, toes pointed before the next step.

It unnerves him.

He has a faint memory of doing the same.

Madame walks around the corner and stops at an archway. There’s a small step into the room but she remains by the arch, looking through the window into the room.

Tommy’s breath catches in his throat. His mouth goes dry. His stomach drops.

Inside the room, six women rise en pointe. Their hair is tied into tight ballet buns. They move as one, every movement elegant and practiced and perfect.

Leaning against a piano, a man watches, eyes like a hawk. By his feet, a group of eight girls kneel. They don’t look older than nine.

“Again.” The instructor snaps in Russian when the women finish. They’re quick to start up their dance again. Every hand flick, every dip is done with ease.

“You’ll break them,” Tommy breathes, remembering when he was with the woman, watching new recruits file in.

“Only the breakable ones.” Madame B. responds and Tommy is sent back to that memory. Only Madame doesn’t have the woman’s hungry smile, her black hair.

He shudders.

His mind starts to crumble.

The woman's form flickers as Madame takes her place. Black hair becomes blonde. Wolf smile turns to a straight line.

The archway and stone and wooden floor switch to the cold of Russian air, of standing among snow with a bloody back and red wings.

The instructors voice becomes that of his teachers, his Handler, Eret.

He's there, holding a gun up to a target and—

He's there, holding a gun up to a struggling person—

He's there, arms tightening around a classmate's neck—

He's there, sending secret smiles to Eryn when everyone else looks away—

He's there, sharing smuggled bread in his shirt with Eryn—

He's there, wiping blood from Eryn's bleeding shoulder-blades—

He's there, on a metal table as the doctors discuss what to alter next—

He's there, tears burning in his eyes as he's strapped down to the chair—

He's there, his Handler ruffling his hair as he tells him of the dead little girl—

He's there, Eret congratulating him on graduating—

“Theseus?” A voice cuts through the hundreds of flickers of memories. He looks away from fighting Dream and sitting in the passenger seat of Sapnap's stolen car and George's laugh after he walked out of his torture lesson and to Madame B.'s impassive face.

The Huntsman Spider makes an appearance.

“Yes, Madame?” He replies and an emotion floods her icy blue eyes - eyes so much like his - before it darts away just as quick.

“What's your name?” She asks.

His spine is straight. His shoulders rolled back. His head is woozy - he does a mental diagnosis, nothing is broken and he's not been shot or stabbed yet it feels like blood loss - and his mouth is dry.

“Theseus,” he replies.

Madame hums. “I always forget how malleable the mind is.”

He continues to look at her. She hasn't given an order so he waits for one.

"I created the Red Room to change the war." Madame says, looking back to the Widows dancing. "Clara only ever wanted power. For years, I've been hiding in her shadow and for years I have plotted her demise. The originals being sent to Billiam. Suggesting she hunt down that Hero's son and then daughter. I never expected you to have as much potential as my daughter did." She looks back at him. "You've impressed me, Theseus."

"Thank you, Madame." He responds, monotonously.

"By killing the woman and Eret, by destroying the Beast labs, by killing Billiam and destroying his facility, by hunting down the rest of Department X's members, you've given me access to the whole chess board." She smiles and he can tell smiling for her isn't a regular occurrence. "General Dreykov can now push himself into power. With your blood, we can create a new serum, a better one. And with the agents you've bought in from the cold, I can continue our objectives."

"What are those?" He questions.

"The whole reason the Red Room was created was because we needed better soldiers, we needed people to stop a war before it can begin." Her smile turns sharp. "With you all here, we can take over the Department and Russia will return to the power it once held. The Motherland will reign victorious."

Somewhere inside the Huntsman Spider, Tommy screams.

Tubbo doesn't know whether Tommy is alright. He assumes he's alive. He assumes the others are alive. Tubbo has to keep himself optimistic and they haven't killed him (yet, his mind murmurs) despite him not being as useful as the others. If he's alive, he assumes the others are.

They have to be.

Tubbo doesn't want to consider the possibility that they're not.

So he ignores the voice in his head telling him the others are maybe dead, probably suffering, and focuses on keeping Ranboo somewhat sane.

For a few days, there seems to be a schedule.

Ranboo is always dropped off between Tubbo's second and third meal of the day and he's always off. Never violent but too quiet. He eats with Tubbo, showers and then the door opens and a guard handcuffs Ranboo's left hand to the bed frame. Early in the morning, the door opens and a guard unlocks Ranboo and then leads him out, the door immediately locking after his exit.

During those moments when he returns, Tubbo talks to him. He lists the same things about his name (he's started to believe he's called Lethe, a name Tubbo remembers as one Lizzie

gave him), his family, his cat waiting for him. Over and over until Ranboo blinks, fog clearing from his eyes.

There aren't any signs of torture or injury.

Tubbo's heard from Tommy about the chair. He checks Ranboo for signs of restraints on his wrists, of electrical burns on his temples. There aren't any.

He concludes that it must be an ability of some kind that is affecting Ranboo in such a way.

Tubbo starts to plan.

When Ranboo goes, Tubbo tries to follow. He's blocked from leaving. He changes tactics.

When Ranboo goes, Tubbo sits in the shower room. There aren't any cameras and Tubbo briefly laughs at the idea that even evil organisations have limits. He sits there until Ranboo returns. No one checks on him.

When Ranboo goes, Tubbo searches for an escape route. There aren't any windows and the door is locked but the shower room has vents and no one tries to find him when he sits in there.

When Ranboo goes, Tubbo messes around with the vent until he can leverage his body up and into the crawl space.

He just needs Tommy. Once he knows Tommy is safe, and well, he can get them out of here.

Corpse isn't a leader. He doesn't like the attention on him, even more so because of his facial burn scars. He works best in the shadows, always has, always will.

Corpse isn't a leader, which is why he's sometimes overlooked.

People like to focus on Dream. His aura commands attention and his scar from Tommy that draws that attention in. Sean and his loud-mouth and louder personality. Sapnap and his fiery spirit. Sykunno and George's pretty faces.

Corpse lingers in the background.

Which is why no one seems to have informed the leadership involved in this facility that his ability is a lot more advanced than what they assume.

Professor Pchelintsov is a master at his work. The way he can bend the mind, rewrite memories, shift brain chemistry is truly an art form.

But Corpse has been altering brains for decades. He knows when his own is being messed with. He simply doesn't fight it.

He lets the Professor try to convince him he's nobody but a dancer while he focuses on the steady bond between him and Ethan. His mind is calm, occasionally chaotic, and Corpse can feel the excitement whenever Mark suggests they film another YouTube video.

Corpse, someone who has spent years repressing his emotions and drowning in his sadness, appreciates the minds of those who are joyful and free. It's refreshing.

So Corpse pulls at his connection to Ethan. Sometimes he checks in on the younger boys, sensing Tubbo's planning and Ranboo's own memories of dancing and Tommy's buffering.

This is a waiting game. He can be patient.

When the time comes for him to act, he will. Without remorse. Without mercy.

For now, he simply tapes up his knuckles and steps into the metal cage designed as an arena. He's up against Dream this time. He can already imagine the ache from Dream's hard-hitting punches.

"Ready?" One of the guards shouts. The crowd around them cheers. Corpse's blood boils but he calms himself.

There will be a time for him to wield his rage as a weapon.

For now he simply needs to fight.

Niki smiles at Minx as she tightens her pointe shoes. Her muscles ache but she's happy. She's a ballerina of the Bolshoi and extremely honoured to be able to follow her dancing dreams.

The training is hard but the glory of soviet culture and the warmth of her parents makes up for it.

Their ballet teacher walks in. He's strict but with his help, they'll all be better. Soon, they'll be dancing on a stage, in front of an audience, who will all be in awe at their performance.

"Let's start," he speaks and they rise as one.

She is a ballerina for the Bolshoi. She is nothing but perfection.

(Bohdana watches as the women stand in rows, bodies a straight line. After instruction, they pull out their guns, stalking forward before spinning. Their movements are timed perfectly. They look deadly.

"When will they be ready?" The instructor asks. Bohdana allows a small smile to grace her lips.

"Grigor says one more session."

These women as Black Widows. They are unbreakable. They are made of marble.)

Karl spots the man leaving the Badlands. Reddish brown hair, dark eyes, trembling hands.
Niko Constantin: Wolf Spider.

He steps out of the car, feeling Quackity staring holes into the back of his head as he makes his way towards the man.

Like the agents, he's quick to look up, sensing Karl's approach. Karl gives him a wide berth and the man pauses. Tilts his head. Karl smiles his usual, happy smile.

"Constantin, right?" Karl starts. The man tenses. Karl steps back. The man relaxes ever so slightly. "I'm from the Beast Labs." That gets Karl a mixed reaction: the man relaxes more but his eyes sharpen. "You want the Huntsman Spiders, right? They're in Tartu, Estonia."

The man stares at him. "Why would you tell me that?" In other words: why should he trust Karl?

Karl keeps his smile. "You don't have to believe me but I- well, I can see things. Things other people can't. If you want your mission to be over, go to Tartu."

The man doesn't need to tell Karl that he's considering it. Not when Karl can see the sudden shift in the timelines as everything falls into place.

"Anywhere particular in Tartu?"

Karl's smile turns into a smirk. "If you're who I think you are, I don't need to tell you where precisely. See it as a challenge."

The timelines aline.

Niko Constantin grins a wolf smile back at Karl. He edges back, keeping his entire focus on Karl, never once turning his back.

It's sad in a way. Someone trained to be a predator acting so much like prey. A wolf, yes, but as scared as a sheep. Karl supposes it makes sense. This man believes he's as free as a wolf, not realising he's tangled in a spider's web.

Once he deems it far enough, Niko finally turns, disappearing behind buildings.

Quackity gets out of the car. "Everything going according to plan, K?"

Karl's smile turns softer, leaning into the hand that rests at the small of his back. "Yeah, Q. Everything seems to be going in the right direction."

Phil has experienced a lot. It's one of the reasons he enjoys life: so much can happen in such a short space of time. He's seen empires rise and fall in mere days.

He's met many people. Warlords and simple peasants. Men with big egos and men with extremely smart minds. Women with power and women who will do anything to secure a future for themselves.

Even now, Phil is caught off guard.

Niko Constantin is someone interesting.

Niko Constantin has also thoroughly angered him.

When he wakes, it's to Grian's panicked chirps, and Puffy's concerned gaze. He lifts his head and groans. The headache rips through his skull, leaving him uncomfortable and dazed.

"Phil?" Puffy asks, quietly and he turns his head, meets her eyes.

"Hey," he greets. Techno's head is in her lap, her fingers brushing through his pink hair. Wilbur's head is resting in Quackity's lap while Karl sits beside them both, wiping the blood from Wilbur's bleeding nose. Both his sons' eyes are closed but their chest continue to move. They're alive. "What the fuck happened?"

Grian helps him as he sits up, ears ringing. "We were hoping you could tell us that," he says, feathers rustling behind him. "I could feel something off but I didn't know what."

"Niko Constantin." Quackity speaks, eyes locked onto Wilbur's unconscious face. "Ring a bell?"

Phil blinks and the memories rush back. He leans back against the wall, wings tightening around him as he turns his head to see them. "Fuck," he murmurs, eloquently.

"What happened?" Puffy asks.

"He has an illusion or nightmare based ability." Phil says. "I was back in the Vault, thought my wings were gone."

Grian makes a low, wounded trill in his throat and Phil's ruffling his hair before he can even think about it. Grian leans into the touch before sitting down, committing to the floor.

"I didn't know that," Quackity says, briefly looking at Phil before looking back at Wilbur. Phil has always found it funny that those two have a rivalry when, if anyone else were to hurt the other, blood would be spilt in their name. "I wouldn't have sent him if I'd known who the fuck he was."

"He wants the others, doesn't he?" Phil asks, rhetorically.

"A Russian with a crazy powerful power and a grudge?" Puffy mutters. "He definitely wants them."

"Then what are we going to do about it?" Grian asks.

Phil looks over to his sons. He can feel the anger of a Viking rise in him, the call of bloodlust. Someone has hurt his children and now, that same person is going after his youngest sons.

“Well,” Karl speaks up, shoots a quick smile at Phil. “I can help with that.”

Quackity snorts. “You sure you want to tell him?”

Karl frowns at Quackity. “Phil’s not going to hurt me.”

“Maybe not now.” Quackity murmurs and Karl rolls his eyes - still golden, still a little unnerving - before looking to Phil.

“You need to go to Tartu, in Estonia.” Karl says. “I told Niko Constantin to go there, too. That’s where the others are.”

Phil blinks at Karl, refuses to let the anger and leftover fear from that nightmare illusion be aimed at the man. “Why?”

“Why would I tell him that? Because that’s the timeline with the best outcome. Plus, Tommy’s the only one who is immune to mental powers. Constantin’s won’t work on him.” Phil continues to blink at him. Karl wilts slightly. “Look, they’re taking the Department down as we speak. They’re going to need help with a few other people and I’m trying-“

“Keyword: trying.” Quackity interrupts.

“-not to involve myself.” Karl finishes, ignoring Quackity. “Time is messy without me interfering but if you want this business cleared up then this is the best option.”

“My boys, are they safe?” Phil asks.

Karl smiles. It looks more like a grimace. “Of course. I would be here in an instant if I thought they were going to die.”

Phil frowns. “That- you didn’t answer my question.”

“I told you: time is messy. So are people.” Karl shrugs, doesn’t meet his gaze. “They’re alive. Safe and healthy might not be the best words to use but in my defence, their situation was too sudden for me to try and change it.”

“Karl,” Phil says through gritted teeth.

“Phil,” Quackity speaks for him. “Sapnap is with them. You think we’d let anything disastrous happen to him? And Tommy’s my employee. I can’t have the kid returning in terrible shape, can I?”

“That doesn’t fill any of us with confidence,” Puffy says, drily.

“How was S.H.I.E.L.D. less complicated than this?” Grian comments. “L’Manberg is insane.”

“You’ll get use to it,” Puffy says, reaching over to pat his knee. She pauses, adds, “Eventually.”

“I hate to think of them being hurt when I could be helping them.” Phil says to Karl, who nods.

“I know that and I know they’re just children but I couldn’t change this.” He stills and then smiles. “It gets worse before it gets better. They look happier, in the future. I’m sorry I didn’t involve myself further. When I do, the timelines get a little fuzzy. I think it’s a natural limit to my power: it stops me from using it constantly. If I did, I’d just be like all of you, timeline blind.”

Quackity wheezes at that. Grian starts to laugh.

“‘Timeline blind’? Really?” Puffy says as she giggles.

Karl rolls his eyes, pouts. “You’re all mean. I miss Sap.” He stills again and then looks between Techno and Wilbur. “Thirty seconds and they’ll be up.”

Phil studies him and then sighs. “Tartu?”

Karl hums. “Yep.”

Phil hopes he doesn’t get there too late but first, his sons need him. Then he has a murder to plan.

Chapter End Notes

Me, adding more chapters because I’m back in the swing of writing and excited to show y’all just how Worse the It Gets Worse Before It Gets Better tag is: hahahahah
Also me, randomly giving Tommy’s Handler a backstory and feeling immense joy over the pain this will cause him: hehehehehehhe

Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

Hello again... the pain and suffering is fully in motion ;)

TW// medical experimentation, medical inaccuracies, brainwashing, child abuse, mentions of child murder, murder, blood, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy wakes up in a viewing room, with glass separating him from the training happening in the adjacent room.

It takes him a few seconds to understand why he woke up.

Two men, both large and muscular, are being evaded and dodged by Ranboo. His black and white hair flops from side to side as he slips under the guard of one man, throwing him to the ground.

Tommy's impressed, even as his head swims, even as worry begins to gnaw at his insides.

Is Ranboo okay? Where is Tubbo? What about his brothers and Niki and the others?

The other man grabs Ranboo, arms tightening around his neck in an unforgiving headlock. Ranboo struggles fruitlessly before falling limp, eyes shuttering, closing.

The man let's go and Ranboo drops heavily to the floor.

Tommy lunges forward, hands hitting the glass. "Ranboo?" He shouts.

Behind him, someone tuts. He freezes before slowly turning around. Madame B. watches him, curiously.

"Put the body and the mind under enough stress and eventually the person will break." She says, hands clasped in front of her. Today, she's wearing a lighter blue skirt and blazer. "You've been out for a few days now. I wondered if you'd hold up to seeing Lethe like this. Obviously not."

"Fuck you," he snarls and her lips twitch. "His name is Ranboo."

"Careful, Theseus. One wrong move and they both die."

The threat makes him tense. The Red Room isn't one for baseless intimidation. If she's saying this, she won't hesitate to follow through.

"You never seem to fully break, do you, Theseus?" She questions. "You bend, yes. But never break."

"I was trained better than that," he replies, shortly.

"Yes, you were." She gestures behind him. Without showing her his back, he turns his head and sees Ranboo slowly shift in his peripheral vision. "He's very much like you: unbreakable."

"He wasn't trained like me though." Tommy snaps. "What happens if he does break?"

Her head tilts. He feels small, all of a sudden. He feels like he did when he was child, young and so afraid of any mistake, of his Handler's disappointed frown.

"You really are attached, aren't you?" She seems baffled by this. "I heard of the chaos you created in Billiam's bastardised version of the Red Room. All because of them. Is it worth it?"

"Yes." Tommy says without any hesitation.

"A shame." She replies. "You unfortunately share your parents weakness."

"Caring for people isn't a weakness." Tommy hisses and she smiles at this. It reminds him of the ice in Siberia, all sharp edges and unforgiving chill.

"For people, it isn't. But you are not a person, Theseus. You are a Huntsman Spider." She waves her hand dismissively and a set of four guards walk in. Tommy's spine snaps straight. "If only you could be stronger, more like the marble you should've been. It wouldn't have to come to this."

"Being an obedient killing machine is something I'm against," Tommy says, backing up, back hitting the glass, caging him in.

"Ah, but you were so good at it," she coos and he shudders at the words, remembering his Handler saying how good he was. "No worries. I have a way to reset you. And if you cannot be reset, I'll allow Lyudmila to conduct her tests."

Before Tommy can blink, he's being swarmed and a needle pierces his neck. In seconds, the sedative - strong enough to put multiple elephants to sleep considering the Huntsman resistance and the Godliness running through his blood - kicks in and Tommy slumps into a guard's arms.

When Ranboo leaves, Tubbo goes to the shower room and climbs into the vents. He goes further and further each day.

He can't find Tommy anywhere. It makes dread and panic settle in his stomach, rising in his throat when there's still no sign of him.

He occasionally sees Niki or Rae. They're with the other women, eyes a little blank, a little distant. Tubbo doesn't like to assume but he has a feeling he knows what that means.

They look like Ranboo does when he returns.

Tubbo shakes his head, continues his search of the facility.

From what he can gather, they're underground. He thinks they might be under the gallery. It would explain why the Doctor was seen entering and never leaving. Only on Sundays.

Wherever they are, it's vast.

He's found at least three dorm rooms like the one he's holed up in, multiple classrooms, gymnastic facilities and a medical wing.

Tubbo isn't looking for any of them. He wants to find Tommy. But it seems he's nowhere to be found. So he switches his focus.

It takes two weeks for him to find what he's after, not including the time spent unconscious.

There, in an office, is a computer.

Tubbo watches, waits, and then mutters, "Fuck it."

He drops down and immediately latches onto the computer. It's too easy to hack - part of him worries about that but no one comes running in to stop him, so much so, he's starting to wonder if the security cameras in the corner of the rooms are monitored - and within a couple of minutes, he's dragging every file he can get his hand on and sending it to two separate emails.

Phil and Sam.

Because if Tubbo is in trouble, he'll always call on his dad to come and help him. Phil will. He'd drop anything to help him.

When Tubbo was younger, he sprained his wrist falling in the playground at school. He assumed, as they took him to the hospital, that getting through to Phil would be one problem and getting Phil to leave his work would be another entirely. Tubbo may not have known his foster dad was a crime boss but he knew he was busy most of the time with work.

He'd been waiting for Techno. At the time, Wilbur was caring for Fundy (and doesn't the thought of Fundy, his nephew in everything but blood, being gone now sting).

Tubbo had barely stepped foot into the hospital when he caught sight of Phil standing there, dressed in an elegant black suit, wings carefully tucked behind skin, and hands wringing together with worry. Techno had been by his side, red eyes watching everyone with a sharpness only ever found in criminals or people who caught them.

Phil had dropped his very important meeting because Tubbo had sprained his wrist. Techno, who could've stayed and handled it, followed. And twenty minutes later and a cast wrapped right around bone, Wilbur had shown up with a teenage Fundy at his side and Ranboo holding his hand.

That was the first time Tubbo realised they were a family. A proper one. A family the older children at the orphanage used to talk about in hushed, dejected tones.

After that, Tubbo started to call Phil dad. Wilbur and Techno and Ranboo were his brothers. Fundy was his nephew.

So Tubbo emails Phil.

He also emails Sam because that man, despite everything that has transpired, is like an older brother to him and Sam taught Tubbo the basics of hacking.

With the information given, Sam can easily find more.

Tubbo wipes any evidence of himself on the computer and then pauses at the sight of the link to the security cameras. He hesitates a glance to the door. Waits for someone to come in.

He can just make out the sound of distant footsteps.

Tubbo wraps it up, uses his wings to get him up to the vent and climbs in.

He looks around more, finds the women dancing in front of a large mirror.

He heads back to his dorm room. Waits for Ranboo.

"Hey, Ranboo." Tubbo greets as usual, making his voice light and cheery. "Do you know who I am?"

"Tubbo." Ranboo says and Tubbo grins at him, antennae bobbing, wings fluttering.

Tubbo is going to get them out of here.

Eventually.

Tommy opens his eyes and finds himself in a school chair, one from his days in the Room. He's strapped down, arms restrained on the desk in front of him.

The classroom setting does nothing to settle his nerves. Especially when he notices the projector on.

"When your father took you," Madame speaks, gaining his attention. She's standing at the front of the classroom, behind the podium. "He also took multiple tapes with him. We later found out these were given to S.H.I.E.L.D.. It's another reason why I left. You were weak and

my daughter was dead and S.H.I.E.L.D. was made aware of the Department. I did not wish to stay on a sinking ship.”

Tommy’s mouth is dry. His tongue is heavy in his mouth. Everything is too bright and too loud. His body aches.

“Now, I was never one for the chair. Electric shock therapy isn’t as precise as I liked it but Clara pushed for it.” Madame clicks her tongue. “Grigor used to handle the brainwashing. He made it so easy for the girls to ease into their roles. You, however, pose an issue as you’re able to resist mental abilities. Thus, this will have to do.”

She holds up a remote, presses a button. The projector clicks as it powers up and Tommy blinks at the white screen, an image forming slowly.

He nearly vomits when it solidifies.

Twenty-eight little boys, baby fat clinging to cheeks, eyes big and smiles showing missing teeth. They’re young, so young. They’ve yet to understand they’re living in a lion’s den, and not as a cub, but as a baby human. A lamb being bred for the slaughter.

He scans the faces. He spots himself, smaller than the others, with hair a few shades darker than the blond he has now, eyes darker like a raging sea than his usual ice.

His breath catches when he looks to the boy next to him.

Eryn. Dark skin and black hair and dark brown eyes.

Eryn, with a big smile, leaning over to nudge younger Tommy. His heart aches. They were close, that much is clear from the casual affection.

But now, Tommy barely has any memories of the boy.

Just his wings.

And there, in the corner, a boy with brown hair and heterochromia. Ranboo. Proof he was part of their class.

“I don’t understand,” he says to Madame.

“You will.” She replies.

The video ends, another starts up and a cycle begins.

Tommy watches himself get older. He watches the lessons, the exercises, the training he endured. He watches from a third person perspective, as he tries to survive.

The first sight of the chair makes him shake.

His screams echo in the classroom as the woman coos to him about a house with a freshly mowed lawn. As she speaks, another voice recording plays of her singing Itsy Bitsy Spider.

Tommy's mind burns at the sound. He can feel his eyes water as his brain tries to fight against the trigger phrases.

Half of him resists heavily: a bird thrashing against the cage it's trapped in.

The other half, the Huntsman Spider, simply retreats, building a web of comfort and softness.

The next video show the surgeries he underwent.

His first was to remove his appendix. He'd been awake for most of it until he passed out from the pain. After that, he stopped resisting when they called for him.

If he was good, the doctors would give him pain medication, occasionally sedate him.

Those moments of floating, of peace, were good.

Each new video brings about a new wave of nausea, of blinding pain in his head.

Tommy and Eryn fighting. Tommy breaking his wrist. A bleeding nose, a broken one. A surgery to fix a bone healed wrong. A surgery to remove his wisdom teeth. So many different angles of him in the chair, thrashing and screaming and eventually falling limp, compliant. Tommy dancing until there's a pool of blood staining the wood.

It all starts to blur.

Tommy and Eryn dancing side by side, movements nothing but flawless. Tommy and Hannah's first meeting, him digging his fingernails into her ankle. Dream training him to fight, Sapnap standing with him in mission debriefs, George showing him how to shoot.

Tommy's eyes continue to water.

Tommy shooting Eryn from the sky. Tommy shooting Hannah in the stomach. Tommy fighting all three of his brothers until bruised and bloody and half-dead. Tommy standing before Eret as he's crowned a Huntsman Spider.

Tommy's body shudders and shakes.

Through it all, one constant is his Handler. Never fully in a video, but there's always a polished shoe or hand at the edge. Always close to Tommy but far away enough to not be incriminated.

He hates not remembering the man. Hates how his memories of him are flawed and delicate, too much focus and they dissolve before he can fully grasp them.

Madame tuts. "You have so much potential, Theseus. Why not give in?"

"I'm not your weapon anymore, bitch."

She takes a deep breath, exhales and steps out from behind the podium. Behind her, a young Tommy is getting beaten by the guards. They're telling him to scream and the assault will

stop.

Younger Tommy - Five, Theseus - doesn't even whimper.

"Then I guess we shall have to visit Lyudmila. Maybe she will be able to fix your attitude."

A guard walks into the classroom.

Tommy doesn't struggle when a needle pierces his neck and he drifts off into nothingness.

"Trigger?" Pandora speaks, voice soft. Sam looks up from his desk, where he's been checking through inmate files.

Some of them are set to be released. Some are getting evaluated. Others are being denied parole. A few are being moved to prisons more suited to handle them.

"Call me Sam, Pandora." He replies, warmly. She's the only thing that remains of his brother. "What's up?"

"An unknown source has sent you an email." Pandora informs him. He raises his eyebrows. "Your personal email."

Well, whoever it is has his attention.

"What's in the email?"

"Files, some encrypted, some not. The email has also been sent to a Philza Minecraft- oh." Sam winces as she pauses. If an AI could clear it's throat, Pandora would be. "Anyway, the email does not have any written content apart from a single sentence stating: come find me - Melittin. What would you-"

Sam scrambles up. "Trace it. Find where it's coming from." He turns, yells, "Ponk!"

"Sam, is everything okay?" Pandora asks, concern in her robotic tone.

"When I taught Tubbo to hack, I told him to pick a name to use because most hackers are cocky and like to leave something to identify them but he was the Angel of Death's kid. He chose Melittin because-"

"Bee venom." Pandora interrupts. "Ah, I understand."

Sam goes to speak when Ponk comes crashing into the room. "Who's dying? Who's dead? What's happening? I think I need to do more cardio." He hisses out, hunched over as he pants.

"Tubbo's in trouble." Sam says, meets Ponk's worried eyes with his own panicked stare. "We need to call Phil."

When Tommy wakes, strapped to a cold metal table, he doesn't cry or thrash or beg.

He lets himself drift into his forest. There, it's quiet and calm and still.

He vaguely registers Doctor Kudrin discussing biopsies and whether he would survive a vivisection. He tunes it out, ignores the first cut into flesh that will probably be the first of many. He simply zones out, into a place where he's surrounded by trees and bushes and bright green grass.

Tommy briefly wonders if this is how he'll die.

Will there be anything for his family to bury or will he be discarded like the other failures, in an unmarked grave?

He shakes himself of the thoughts. They're unhelpful, not needed.

He sits down, hands pressed to the grass as his body starts to scream in agony.

In Tartu, in a cafe, a man sips his coffee and watches the gallery across the street.

He doesn't want to run in. Knowing Bohdana, she'd shoot him on sight or get a Widow to snap his neck. He has a mission to complete.

So for now, he drinks his cooling coffee and waits.

Spiders and their webs, biding their time until a silk thread is pulled by unsuspecting prey.

Cold air hits his face as he scales the fire escape. Sliding the window open, he slips inside, removing the VP9 from his thigh holster. The silenced pistol is solid in his grip, familiar and comforting.

(He rises en pointe, moves with the music like it's second nature.)

He passes through the tidy living room, steps around the kitchen island and through the hallway. It is dark but the goggles on his face have a night-vision feature.

On silent, steady feet, he opens the bedroom door. Two sleeping figures greet him, unaware of what's to come.

("Lethe," Madame murmurs. "Such a smart name for a spider.")

He raises his arm.

Takes a slow inhale.

Grips the trigger. Once. Twice.

Exhales.

Steps back and out of the apartment, back into the open air.

A portal opens on the roof.

(She twirls and spins and breathes the music, the dance as easy as breathing. He joins the lone ballerina, hands on her waist as he lifts her, spins her.)

He steps through, back home, coming in from the cold.

(A bourée across the wooden floor, moving as one.)

A Widow with pink hair tied back lays atop a roof, sniper rifle in her hands, the heat of the Moroccan sun beating down on her. Another Widow atop another rooftop watches below, eyeliner sharp and lips twisted into a savage grin.

("Are they ready?" Madame asks.

"Watch." Grigor grins, speaks into the microphone before him. "Target is making the exchange. Go."

From the tiny cameras embedded in their suits, they watch as the Black Widow's get to work.)

Two Widows drop to the ground, another steps from the shadows, picking up a handful of sand from beneath her boots.

A school bell rings out. The woman in the apartment jerks back from the window, disappearing out of the door.

"Target was spooked," Nikita speaks.

"Heading East," Minx adds.

"Got it." Leslie speaks through their comms, a portal appearing before the three Widows on the ground. They step through, appearing outside of the apartment.

Brooke catches her as she tumbles from the lobby, slamming her into the door. The woman reels back, nose dripping blood, and then chokes as her necklace tightens around her neck.

("They're perfect, aren't they?" Grigor breathes.

Madame chuckles. "They do work as a well-oiled machine, don't they?")

Rae leans forward, snatches the bag from the choking woman. She hands it over to Brooke, who rifles through the pockets and pulls out a flash drive.

(The women rise, arabesques in sync, spinning out and rising once again. The smiles never drop from their faces.)

“Target two is on the move,” Minx tells them.

Rae turns to an opening portal, steps through and immediately throws the charged up sand. Behind her, she hears a gurgle and then a snap. It seems the necklace broke the woman’s neck. Tina works fast.

Focusing back in front of her, a man collapses under the explosions. He struggles to get to his feet, blood pouring from a head wound.

The hair on the back of her neck rises. A bullet pierces his knee. He screams, tumbles to the ground.

“Wait, wait,” he says in Arabic, trying to speak through bloodied lips. “Please, wait-“

A bullet pierces his neck. Rae leans down and pats at his pockets, finding another flash drive.

“Converge on team leader,” Nikita says. “Packages secure.”

(The ballerinas fall into their final position, dance complete.)

Dream dances. He only exists for this. He has no parents, no siblings, no friends, no purpose. Only dance.

(He swings, punch landing, nearly shattering George’s cheekbone.)

The repetitive motion. The ache of his muscles. The burn of his lungs.

(Spitting blood, he ignores the pain of bruised knuckles.)

He sometimes can faintly remember the other dancers with him. The pretty one. The burning one. The one with scars. The one with a manic gleam to his eyes. The soft one.

(He holds Sykunno’s neck in his hands, squeezes until the order is given for him to step away.)

Every time he thinks too hard about them, his vision whitens. He opens his eyes to a wooden floor beneath pointe shoes and a mirror before him.

(Sean sends him into a coughing fit when he kicks him in the neck.)

He dances.

(He fights.)

He only exists to dance.

(If he loses a fight, he may lose his life.)

Dream focuses back on the music.

(The cheers of the crowd, the blood rushing in his ears, the steady beat of his heart.)

Dream once again starts to dance.

Chapter End Notes

While writing pure angst, sprinkling in the found family of Phil being a Good Dad and Techno and Wilbur being Good Brothers :)

Chapter 29

Chapter Notes

Hello again!

In light of recent events, I'd like to say that I'm still going to finish my current fanfics and they will still include c!Techno. I know a lot of people need time and I know some people won't be able to continue reading: that's completely fine. You should all think of your own mental and physical health.

I'm going to keep writing him because Techno always did love advertisement and clout and writing him out would feel like a disservice to his character.

Take care of yourselves.

Fuck cancer.

And remember, what is grief if not love persevering?

Back to the chap for today:

TW// medical experimentation, medical inaccuracies, body horror, a little bit of gore, mentions of torture (medical torture), brainwashing, child abuse, mention of child death, blood, injury, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It starts with biopsies. Small incisions for skin and muscle samples.

The pain is barely felt.

A larger incision and a scraping sensation for the bone samples.

Tommy drifts atop the table.

The forest of his mind is a warm place to be. It shelters him, protects him from the harsh conditions he's facing.

He can't fight this, even if he wants to. One wrong move on his part and Tubbo and Ranboo will be dead, his brothers, his friends. They'll all be taken from him.

Tommy doesn't know who he is without them.

Being a Huntsman means only ever being the spider. His personality wasn't influenced by parents, it was influenced by what was needed of him. The Room demanded a soldier, a spy, a spider. That's all Theseus was.

But Tommy is Sapnap's boisterous nature and Dream's laugh and George's calculating brain. He's Eryn's wings and Hannah's flowers and his classmates desire to survive.

His new family, his new father figure, his new brothers, gave him hope. Hope for better days, brighter days. Hope that he can be something human. They gave him compassion and warmth and curiosity.

But hope is a fickle thing.

Hope is fragile and hope cannot ensure his survival.

Tommy is proud of himself for not being Theseus, for pushing the webs away and growing as a person. For being that boy, holding a broom, destroying what's left of the spider's web engulfing him.

But Theseus never had hope.

Theseus only ever had himself.

And Theseus never would've ended up here.

Alexander enjoys the quiet. The dead do not talk and Alexander is forever grateful for that. Although running a morgue where the dead speak would earn him a lot of money.

Milena despite everything, is still his wife and after countless hours of talking, they've agreed that secrets are safety. For Nadezhda's sake, Alexander ignores the fact his wife is a Black Widow.

For once, Russia is quiet.

The agents have left and Alexander may have heard the rumours of certain people committing suicide but he's good at his job. He doesn't ask questions. He doesn't interfere. He keeps quiet.

But the quiet does not last.

Whispers. Small at first. Brief murmurs in the dark, hushed and fearful.

Milena looks surprised by whatever she hears. Alexander wants to ask but he keeps his mouth shut.

And then, one night when he's turned the light off and pulled Milena close, she whispers, "They're back."

He tenses. He knows exactly who they are.

“Willingly?” He questions, voice barely audible. There is comfort in the darkness, in the silence.

“The woman that trained me is involved,” Milena mutters. “They are hers now.”

Alexander shivers. “Nadia?”

“She won’t have her,” Milena hisses and Alexander relaxes.

If all else fails, if the agents come for them, he trusts that Milena will keep their daughter safe.

The following day, Alexander goes back to work. The dead do not speak and neither does he.

Ranboo wakes with his wrist handcuffed to the bedpost. He gets unlocked, eats a small breakfast and heads to the Professor. The man is short and portly and grins yellow teeth whenever Ranboo does as he’s told.

He sits in a cool metal chair and everything blurs.

When his mind has been altered, when all he knows is dance, Lethe is taken to be trained, or given missions to complete. Like this, his mind is malleable, bending but not breaking.

A woman with blonde hair and blue eyes - so much like someone Lethe tries desperately to remember - tells him he’s made of marble. Lethe doesn’t know what she means. His thoughts are like honey inside his skull, heavy and hard to wade through.

Lethe wakes and he’s standing in an apartment, gun pointed at someone.

Lethe wakes and he’s ducking under hard-hitting fists, body moving quicker than his brain can think.

Lethe wakes and he’s dancing. Rising and falling. Spinning and twirling. Leaping and jumping.

Lethe wakes and a boy with bee wings is asking him, “Do you know who I am?”

“Tubbo,” he says. He knows this one. This thought is stronger than the others, easier to hold onto.

The boy smiles. “Hi,” he replies, wings fluttering behind him. “You’re Ranboo. Phil is our dad and we have two brothers, technically three-“

Ranboo smiles, let’s himself be comforted by Tubbo’s voice.

The next time Lethe wakes, he only remembers dancing, the familiar sound of classical music.

The forest greys at the edges of his vision. He's pulled to lucidity to the regular beat of what he assumes is a heart monitor.

"Good morning, Theseus!" Doctor Kudrin greets, cheerily. "You've given me so much data to investigate."

Tommy blinks at the white ceiling above him. His entire body aches and screams in pain. There's also a tingling sensation by his ribs, across his stomach and near his heart.

He remembers it from when Igor sliced his throat and it healed.

"We've been conducting many surgeries," she informs him. "Your healing is close to that of Weapon X's, which is remarkable considering healing isn't your original power. Of course, we don't know if you can regenerate fully like he can but with the amount of blood you've lost we may soon find out."

He wonders if Sean is doing alright. He knows out of all of them, he's the one that can survive whatever's thrown at him. But Tommy worries for his mental health.

Not being able to die is more of a curse in their line of work.

Sean has seen hundreds of children arrive at the doors of the Room and has buried more. For him, time is the mind-killer. Tommy thinks Sean could be like Niko Constantin, a feral murderer filled with bloodlust, but he has a stable group of people who care for him.

Could Niko have been saved if he had a support system?

Or will they all forever be tainted by the blood of the people they've killed?

"You're such a good patient, Theseus," Doctor Kudrin continues and Tommy can't help but preen at that. "No screaming, crying or thrashing. It made my job so much easier to collect samples."

The praise reminds Tommy of the lighter sides of the Room, the better parts.

Everyone looks at the Red Room and sees hell on earth. It certainly felt like it. But there were moments of warmth, of goodness. People can only be pushed so far before insanity gnaws at the mind and the Room needed capable weapons, not faulty machinery.

Tommy's Handler was rarely around and his memories of the man are distant, fuzzy. His days in the Room were focused on the woman, and then his brothers.

But Tommy, like all of the other agents, had a Handler. One that focused on the group of twenty-eight children as a whole - imprinting, the critical period where they started to see this

sole person as their provider, their parent - and was then the agent's Handler or swapped out with a more suitable one.

His Handler was tall, with dark blond hair and black eyes hidden behind thick glasses. He dressed in an impeccable suit of stripped green and white, and always wore an accompanying smile. Compared to the other Handler's Tommy saw, he thought his was one of the best.

Brief hair ruffles. Quick jokes. A chuckle and bright smile.

Mr. Cicle always seemed out of place in the Room. He was too light compared to the overall oppressive atmosphere the Room created simply by existing.

Tommy had heard another recruit in passing once comment, "He should be Mr. Psycho instead." He didn't really think much of it. He was trying too hard to survive.

He would return from a mission and his Handler would give him a boiled sweet, would ruffle his hair. He'd stop struggling during an operation and praise would spill from his mouth.

Back when they were small, a full class, Mr. Cicle would be with them the whole time. He sat with them in classes. He'd laugh as they stumbled over their own growing limbs. He even, occasionally, offered brief hugs. Tommy can remember when he fell and cut his hands and Mr. Cicle sat with him, telling him he was brave and strong, hand warm as he patted his small shoulder.

But as they grew, he became distant.

And when he returned, the warmth would abruptly turn icy.

His laugh was dark. His black eyes harsh. His hand, that once held them softly, would hover as if to strike, grinning the moment they froze in preparation.

Unlike the guards, he never beat them but his disappointment was worse than his anger. Before ten, the boys main competition was who could get the man to smile that winning smile.

"Theseus," Doctor Kudrin pulls him away from his thoughts. "Where do you go to?"

Curiosity and intrigue line her tone. With the memory of Mr. Cicle at the forefront of his mind, Tommy has no choice but to tell the truth.

"My forest."

"Your forest?" She asks. He hears metal on metal. The smell of disinfectant. His shirt is pulled up. A pinch at his ribs. He sucks in a sharp breath.

His vision darkens. He relaxes back onto the metal table. Between blinks, he's surrounded by trees.

"Yes," he murmurs as his skin is sliced open. "My forest."

In an all white room, Professor Grigor starts up the projector and presses play on the videos he's queued up. The Huntsman beside him watches raptly, heterochromia eyes flicking over the screen.

One video is of Tyr, formally known as the Blood God, using his sword to cut up his victims after incapacitating them with his fear ability. His movements are confident, sure and Grigor can't wait to see his Huntsman pick up his fighting style.

The next few videos are of the other agents. The Widows using their thighs to crush windpipes, the Spiders using their strength to snap bone.

He even shows him a short clip of the Wolf Spider. All messy and uncoordinated, strength and grit and bloodlust fuelling him.

Grigor uses other clips and watches the change happen in his Huntsman. His posture slouches to that of Loki, his shoulders shift like Odin's, his hands clench like Tyr. But there are other subtle shifts: the way his head tilts like Theseus, the narrow to his eyes like Nikita.

The door opens behind them. He turns, meeting Bohdana's sharp gaze.

"Status?"

"Meet Taskmaster," Grigor introduces. "I think we should move up our timeline."

"S.H.I.E.L.D.?" She asks and he nods.

"As fun as it would be for the Syndicate to find out S.H.I.E.L.D. is lying to them, we need Theseus to be sedated. We need to break him before he can fix himself."

She hums. "Send him. We can monitor how much he's learnt."

She turns to leave, he calls out to her, stilling her in place. "And Theseus?"

"That's Lyudmila's choice. If she wants to break him, she will."

In Moscow, a man basking in the morning sun pauses. Something pulls at his senses and he hums a jaunty tune as he smiles at the sun.

The desire to run has dissipated since he left the Beast Labs. His danger sense no longer pings frantically, fearful of the many threats that could possibly be after him.

But here, under the Russian sun, he is safe.

He is but a memory now and everyone knows how unreliable Red Room agent's memories are.

No one is looking for him. After all, he doesn't involve himself too heavily. He won't be a suspicious death, an unlikely suicide. He has no plans to be lured into silk, wrapped tightly in a web he can't escape from.

Once upon a time, he was selected for a program, only for it to fall through before he could try his hand.

Once upon a time, a man offered him an opportunity to win a game. He stood in a labyrinth and discovered his instinctive power. Four hundred and fifty-six contestants and he won. He earned his place there and travelled back to the place of the program, eager to show them what he could've been like if they'd like him try.

Once upon a time, a woman with black hair greeted him in the snow and offered him a job. He accepted the position as a Handler to a bunch of well-behaved child soldiers. He did well for himself there.

And then one night, the urge to run again spiked.

He left.

When he returned a week later, half of the building was blown up and the agent he was supposed to control had fled the web. Maybe he was a little proud. Maybe he saw himself in the blond hair and determination burning in those icy blue eyes.

But none of that matters here.

Not when he checks his phone to find the Director of S.H.I.E.L.D. asking for information.

After all, they turned him away when he could've been something great and forgot, when inviting him back, that he didn't need to come in from the cold when he was born in it. He wasn't tied down by silk, was there because he wanted to be.

Eret always thought the Huntsman that gave over those tapes was the first time the Room had been outed and betrayed. As did Clara.

Neither expected the betrayal to come from a colleague, decades worth of secret information spread for the right price. They preached about cockiness to their agents but never learnt not to fall in the same trap.

His mind is quiet and so he smiles at the sun, black eyes glittering in the light. It's going to be a good day today, he thinks. A perfect day to wear his perfect green striped suit.

A woman in neon green high heels is seen entering a cafe in Prague. She's also spotted leaving with a man, arms linked and head bowed together as she laughs at something he says.

Three days later, that man is found with his throat slit in his bedroom.

A woman in a long, red dress walks into a hotel in Austria, pulling a man into an elevator, red lips pulled wide into a sharp grin.

When the cleaner enters the room the next morning, she finds the man hanging in the bathroom.

A woman running in Amsterdam sits beside a man to drink from her water bottle. He greets her, smile widening when she leans over to see what he's reading in the newspaper.

An hour later, he's rushed into hospital after suffering a heart attack. He's pronounced dead a few minutes later.

(Russia shivers as the Black Widows are let loose, silken webs wrapping around the world.)

(Scott groans as the emails burst through, telling him about his dying agents. He looks to his phone, wondering if he should call Odin and demand answers.

He doesn't.

He instead contacts his informant.)

In Norway, a portal opens up. A lone figure steps out. All of this goes unnoticed by Frida as she drives home. She hums along to the radio and pulls up to the bridge, flicks her indicator on and turns the wheel.

Something slams into the car, flipping it over. There's a moment of disorientation. A second of her trying to slow her heartbeat and take note of her injuries. A few cuts from the shattered glass, a sprained wrist, maybe a concussion.

But she has no time to think.

Not when she lifts her head and sees someone approaching her car.

They're tall, definitely over six foot. There's a confidence in their walk that warns her that this person is skilled. But none of that it was terrifies her.

What has her fumbling to undo her seatbelt and reach frantically for her gun is the red star on the person's belt. The red star of soviet supremacy. The red star of the Red Room.

It isn't a red hourglass, so not a Black Widow, but a Huntsman Spider.

"Fuck," she curses, throws herself out of the window and shoots. The figure simply shifts, holds up an arm to block the bullets. "I don't fuck with Russians!" She shouts at him. "I haven't in years."

The figure doesn't stop walking towards her. No response. Cold and clinical. She throws the gun at him and lunges.

The dance of her life begins. Each punch is countered, each kick is dodged. He moves fluidly, ruthlessly. There are these moments though, a brief pause, where he almost seems to be studying her, inspecting how she moves.

Her theory is confirmed when she throws herself onto his shoulders and tries to flip him. Only he follows the movement and immediately ends up using the momentum to end up on her shoulders, flipping her around until they're both sprawled on the road, fire from the crash illuminating their surroundings.

Frida twists her body, ending up in a crouch.

He copies her perfectly, twisting himself and ending up in the same crouch, facing her, head tilted.

Then he turns his head to focus on her flipped car. He rises from the crouch, leaves her to head towards it.

"You're not here for me," she breathes and remembers the briefcase she carries, filled with power enhancers. S.H.I.E.L.D. wants them and she doesn't question her boss.

The Department can't have them.

She plucks the knife from her ankle holster and runs forward. He dodges again, catching her arm and flipping her. She pulls back, swipes at his legs but he catches the strike, slams his leg down, crushing her sprained wrist into the road.

She hisses out what should've been a scream. A gloved hand grips her red hair, tugs her face up until she's meeting a masked face and reflective goggles.

With a sharp punch, he sends her flying back. She gasps, ribs protesting such a hit. He's strong, extremely so and she guesses he's been enhanced like the other agents.

But there's another thing about him.

He's copying her moves but it's more than that. Every move seems like it's been rehearsed, like it's been copied from others.

She wonders, as she pulls herself up, how many of them died for him to learn such skill.

Pulling out the slim grappling hook S.H.I.E.L.D. technicians made, she rushes him again, looping the rope around his legs and then aiming up. The grappling hook loops around the braces.

Immediately he's pulls from the ground and she doesn't waste time as she sprints to her wreck of a car, pulling out the briefcase.

The silence has her spinning to watch as he pulls a compatible sword - it looks like a katana, sharp edged defined by red - from the holster on his back. With ease, he twists in the air, katana slicing through the rope and making him drop. He lands, knees braced and rises.

The way he holds the katana is familiar and once again, she feels like he's copied this from someone he knows. No one should look so comfortable holding a sword without prior training.

He stalks forward and slashes and slices at her, nicking her more than once. The pain becomes secondary as she struggles to keep fighting. With a roundhouse kick, gripping the briefcase so he holds it tight, he sends her sailing in the air and then crashing into the river below.

("Target acquired?" Grigor asks through Lethe's comm.

"No," he replies, frowning at the empty briefcase. "Where to?"

"Leslie," Grigor calls. "Send Lethe to her location. I need those vials if the God is to be useful. We wouldn't want the good Doctor to kill him too soon.")

Frida gasps as she sits on the shore, staring at the power enhancer vials. With a minute of hesitation, she crushes them under her hand and watches the liquid ooze into the gravel beneath her.

"That was a mistake."

She spins around, coming face to face with the Huntsman Spider again. His voice is deep but young. It makes her stomach twist.

"The Room isn't worth it," she tells him, struggling to her feet. "They're using you."

"I don't have a choice," he says, the child about to kill her.

She puts up a fight but he's better than her, anticipating her moves, using her skills against her.

Frida's head is held under the water as she thrashes in his grip, water filling her lungs.

(Her body is recovered four days later.

Scott, upon hearing the news, curses loud. Only one organisation has the capability to take on a S.H.I.E.L.D. agent and only one organisation is crumbling from within.

His fingers hover over his phone. He should call Odin, warn him that his agents may be going rogue.

He doesn't.

Not when he doesn't know if Odin is the one behind this, loaning out his agents back to the Department.)

Corpse blinks the fake memories from his mind. It's getting harder as the days pass. He wonders if he'll break after a month. He wonders if a month has already passed.

He focuses on his connection to Ethan (laughter as Mark teaches him basic DIY that ends with Ethan in the pool as Amy laughs so hard the camera in her hand shakes) and tries to ignore the growing headache, the pain in his knuckles.

He can't use his abilities here, not for fear that the Professor will pull him away from the others. If he's here, he can monitor them, keep them safe while they live out fake lives.

But he's not used to fighting this much.

Corpse was trained to fight, yes, but he's rarely had to fall back on said training.

He never had to fight Sean in the Room to get to the graduation ceremony. Corpse simply waited for Sean - Jack versus Hellion, still mourning the loss of his first friend, his only friend, a boy with ribs for teeth and a smile dripping blood - to lunge forward and then he slapped him. Sean fell under Corpse's control and that was it. The match was called and Hellion became a Huntsman, he became Corpse.

Unlike Dream, who is built to fight and keep fighting, Corpse's missions involved going where Leslie's portals opened and then touching whoever his Handler, Mr. Cicle, or Eret, or occasionally the woman, told him to. Then he'd go back to the Room, mission complete.

So fighting like this is wearing him down quicker than the others. Well, maybe Sykunno and him have that in common. Sykunno, who uses his powers like extensions of himself. Fire and ice, a smile that hides a cold-blooded killer beneath.

They're both the weakest links here, where powers aren't used. With George coming next.

Corpse finds it funny, almost ironic, that the ones trained by Madame are becoming the weakest links.

Surprisingly, or maybe not so surprisingly considering his fractured mind, Sean is the best of them. He's got endless amounts of energy, a viciousness that could rival Eret's, and a passive ability that means he's as fit as a fiddle minutes after a fight.

It makes Corpse worry, though, because the betters keep wanting more from him. Sean is becoming the fan favourite.

But worse than that is the way his eyes fall blank. It reminds Corpse of when Felix died, of when Sean left for the Beast Labs and came back wrong.

He's heard one of the guards mention how much Sean is acting like a Wolf Spider. All of whom are dead apart from the one that ripped them apart and went on a rampage until he was locked in a gulag for decades.

So Corpse watches over the Spiders and he pays attention to what the guards are saying. He just needs to keep them alive.

And wait for an opening to get them all out.

But for now, he focuses on Ethan as he chases Mark around his garden with a bucket of ice water.

He simply needs to wait.

Chapter End Notes

It's all coming together :)

Chapter 30

Chapter Notes

Hello lads!

As you can see, the chapter count has changed and that's because I have nearly finished writing it all, I'm nearly done!

TW// medical experimentation, medical trauma, medical inaccuracies, blood, injury, graphic depiction of injury, weaponry, brief mention of self-harm (a character stabs them-self to be more aware), brainwashing, child abuse, mention of child death, mention of body horror, mild gore, violence, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy wakes to hands moving him around. The forest clings to him and Tommy doesn't want to leave its comfort so soon. He lingers, half of his mind focusing on the sensation of people flipping him onto his stomach and the other half relaxing in the grass and bushes, shadowed by trees.

He's preoccupied but he's aware of hands pulling up his shirt.

Hands near the scars across his shoulder blades.

Hands near his wings.

His mind snaps into his body. He breathes through the growing panic as the hair on the back of his neck rises.

"-God with avian traits," Doctor Kudrin's voice finally registers. "How fascinating."

Tommy's blood runs cold.

Not his wings.

Not Eryn's wings.

Fingers press at his spine, his shoulder blades. Then he feels the familiar chill of a scalpel near his skin.

"I wonder how different your biology is," she continues and Tommy-

The scalpel presses in. The sharp bite of pain as his skin slices. The rush of warmth from his blood spilling out of the cut.

Tommy snaps.

The Huntsman takes over.

His hand snaps out, knocking Lyudmila away and he immediately sits upright, throwing his legs over the side of the metal table.

His vision is filled with black spots and his stomach twists with nausea but he glares at her openly. He's freezing cold but sweating from the blood loss and his entire body aches, littered with open wounds.

"Now, now, Theseus," Doctor Kudrin starts but Tommy snarls at her.

"Fuck off," he spits.

Not his wings. Not his last remaining piece of Eryn. His first friend. Gone. Twenty-eight to one, to him, to Eryn in a grave.

She leans over and hits something under her desk. Guards are quick to spill into the room - four of them - and Tommy eyes them carefully. Everything is hazy but he won't let them damage the last thing he has of Eryn.

"Let me conduct my tests." The doctor says as if speaking to a child.

One of the guards makes the mistake of grabbing Tommy. Even under the effects of pain and blood loss, he's still a Huntsman Spider. He's trained better than this.

He twists himself out of the grip, shoulder jutting under the man's chest so Tommy can flip him with ease. Stamping on his neck isn't needed but Tommy is out for blood.

They're trying to take Eryn from him.

He won't let them do it again.

Another lunges for him but Tommy is all Huntsman. His instincts are better than these men's best strategy and he's quick to jut elbows into throats, fingers into eyes, knees into groins.

Four down and Lyudmila gone.

Tommy wipes his bloody hands on his shirt and then straightens his nose, wiping the blood from a lucky punch.

He's barely stepped over their bodies when more flood in. Six men grab him, hold him down as he writhes and thrashes.

Then a knee digs into his spine.

Cold metal bites into his skin, slicing down, tearing at flesh.

Tommy screams and maybe it's the fear of losing Eryn again, maybe it's the anger at this whole situation or maybe it's simply pure adrenaline mixed with the embers of godliness in his veins. Whatever it is, Tommy somehow wiggles his way out of the hold.

And he doesn't dare hold back, or pull any punches.

He slaps Lydumila, grabbing her scalpel - and breaking a few fingers along with it - and using it on any artery he can find. Blood spurts from necks, thighs, stomachs. Tommy doesn't care. He doesn't stop.

Someone tries to tackle him but he digs his heels in and flips them, following the movement down to stab the person in the neck.

Only as he's rising does he realise the situation around him.

Bodies strewn around the entire hallway. Blood pooling beneath his bare feet. Scalpel dripping blood onto white tile that quickly stains red.

Some of the guards are still alive: groaning and hissing. Tommy turns from them, to the people standing at the end of the hallway.

Madame B. has a strange look on her face while Lyudmila and Grigor hide behind her. Behind them, a few women stand. Tommy remembers them from before. Black Widows.

And they all seem to be huddled around a singular man. Short and portly with a receding hairline, thick glasses on the bridge of his nose and dressed in an all black suit.

Tommy has no idea who he is but he doesn't care.

He bares his teeth at them. Grigor trips over himself as he flinches back. Lyudmila's hands are shaking.

"Theseus," Madame B. says, pale hands gesturing to the bloodshed at his feet. "Is this necessary?"

"Fuck yes, you bitch," Tommy snarls. No one is taking Eryn from him again. Never again.

She tuts, tilts her head in Grigor's direction. "You were so good at the start, Theseus. Don't you want to be good and listen?"

The praise makes him shudder. He remembers Mr. Cicle saying things like that to him, remembers Eret and the woman saying it too.

The Room was pain, yes, but they needed obedient soldiers. To get those, they needed that connection to them.

"Fuck. You." He spits.

She hums and Grigor grabs a phone from his pocket and presses something.

“Are you fit to be a Huntsman, Theseus?” Eret asks, voice echoing from the device’s speakers. “You’re my spider, my weapon, my property. Are you going to listen?”

Tommy shivers. He knows Eret is dead. Corpse killed them and their body was shown on live TV. Tommy knows Eret is dead and rotting.

But hearing those phrases - clearly clipped together from other footage the Room documented - from Eret’s lips makes Tommy want to drop to his knees and bow his head.

He grits his teeth. “If you thinks that’s going to stop me, you’re fucking crazy,” Tommy says, stepping closer.

Grigor stumbles back, hits something else on his phone.

Tchaikovsky’s The Sleeping Beauty plays and Tommy shudders as he hears the woman sing over it, “The Itsy Bitsy Spider climbed up the water spout-“

She’s dead too.

Tommy killed her, took her power. He’s a God now, not her.

She’s dead. Gone. Nothing.

“Not working,” he lies, stepping closer, mind burning and body numb.

“I thought you said he was the best, Bohdana?” The man Tommy doesn’t know asks.

Madame tenses, swallows. So he must be important then, if he can make Madame listen.

Grigor hastily presses something else.

“C’mon kid,” Mr. Cicle speaks in that even, calming tone. “Don’t make me punish you. Be good for me, yeah? Huntsman Spiders don’t feel, Theseus. They don’t break and they aren’t weak. Be good for me, kid.”

Tommy’s knees buckle. He’s biting his cheek so hard, the metallic taste of his own blood is filling his mouth.

He doesn’t want to be punished, he doesn’t-

He’s good. He can be so good. He can listen. He’s good at listening and being-

He-

Tommy takes the scalpel and stabs it into his thigh. Pain immediately blooms across his skin and muscle, allowing him to focus on the present. On the here and now.

Eret is dead and the woman is dead and Mr. Cicle isn’t here.

Tommy looks up, narrows his eyes. "I'm going to enjoy killing you fuckers."

And then Grigor presses the screen again and Tommy pauses before pure, unadulterated rage fills his veins.

He's playing avian cooing sounds. Soft chirps. Loud trills. Tommy can make out that they're meant to sooth, a parent calling their child, calming sounds to relax tense muscles.

But they're not Phil.

Phil doesn't sound like this when he calls to Tommy. His chirps are deeper. His trills are sharper.

Tommy wants Phil.

Tommy wants his dad.

Not this.

Gone is the obedience swimming in his limbs from listening to his Handlers, replaced with fury. Not the burning kind, that leaves him baring his teeth like an angry wolf. No. It's cold, as cold as ice.

It's a Huntsman Spider, latching onto its prey and preparing to run, preparing to hunt, preparing to kill.

The Black Widows waiting at their backs are trained to be nice and sweet and oh so innocent. Tommy has been trained to see the mark, hone in, and then rip whoever it is apart.

Wilbur once asked why Tommy was so aggressive, why he was such a feral little creature.

Tommy never told him the Room made them take their anger and fear and wield it into a weapon, hidden behind an indifferent mask. Tommy was trained to be silent and quick and efficient.

But that anger, that fear, never really went away.

So with that rage burning in his limbs, he lunges forward, going straight for the throat.

A Widow lunges back and they start to dance. Tommy kicks. She punches. He slips around her. She elbows him. A jab, a kick, a hit. A punch, a dodge, a feint.

Normally, a Black Widow is classed as better than a Huntsman.

But the Widow- the woman before him is only fighting because of her orders. Tommy is fighting because he wants to wrap his hands around Madame's neck and squeeze.

Sure, he gets punched in the jaw for his trouble but the scalpel easily slices through her throat. He flips her, hot blood hitting his shoulder, and barely has time to watch her struggle to breathe when the other two Widows quickly advance on him.

Tommy doesn't want to kill these women.

Unlike the guards who are here of their own volition, the Widows are stuck, chained here like he is. Their minds have been brainwashed and their bodies conditioned. He wonders how old they were when the Room found them, or if they, like him, were born to it.

He may not want to kill them but he refuses to back down.

All he feels is cold anger.

So he slices and stabs, ignoring the bruised body he's getting from repeated hits and the way his vision swims. He's exhausted and he hopes his blood loss won't make him pass out before he can even reach Madame.

That would be annoying.

A fist swings close to his face. He catches it, pivoting (the ballet lessons are unfortunately useful in combat, he will admit) into the body behind him, grabs a fist full of hair and throws his body forward. The Widow is thrown from his shoulder, slamming into the wall and he turns to the other, dropping low to avoid a high kick and darting close.

The Widow backs off before he can cut her so he turns to the other, rising on shaky legs and kicks her head. Her body rocks back and he kicks again until she crumbles to the ground in a heap.

"How are you still standing?" The Widow facing him asks, disbelief ringing loud in her tone.

He snorts. "Spite, mostly." He points his scalpel at the retreating figures down the hallway. "These fuckers are using you, you know that right? You're nothing but a pawn in their shitty game. But not me. Fuck their game. Fuck their rules. Fuck them."

The Widow tilts her head and Tommy knows he's getting through to her.

But he also knows it's not enough.

It took Tommy months, years to plan his escape from the Room. It took that long for him to build up the nerve to even try to escape.

The Room has its hooks in deep. They act like those hooks are to tether the agents, to keep them safe, to bring them in from the cold. But those hooks hold them down, lock them in place, refusing to let them go.

He rushes to tackle her. She catches his arms and then she's swinging herself up onto his shoulders, throwing herself down and flipping him until he slams into the tiled floor below.

He groans. "Fuck," he hisses, kicking her ankles to stop her advancing. "I forgot how much that hurts."

She lunges at him and he flips himself up a second before her foot connects to where his head used to be.

“I don’t want to kill you.” He tells her. “But I will.”

She smiles. It’s not a pretty smile. It’s the smile of a spider who has just ensnared her prey in her web. “I don’t think you will.”

Tommy pauses at that self-assured tone. Widows aren’t cocky, and she’s not, but this is concerning.

Before Tommy can ask, he hears familiar footsteps approaching him.

He freezes. Swallows. Refuses to turn around.

Because he knows those footsteps like he knows his own heartbeat.

His brothers.

All three of them.

“Theseus,” Madame speaks. “Stand down.”

“Or what?” Tommy asks, the fight draining from him in seconds. “You’ll kill them?”

“No,” she says, almost softly. It grates on his ears. “I’ll make them kill each other. You remember Eret’s test, don’t you? You did so well on that, shooting Dream, fully intending to kill him.”

Tommy shakes at that memory. He still has nightmares over it. Of Dream on his knees, eyes accepting as Tommy held a gun to his head. No hesitation. No fear. So long that Tommy survived, Dream didn’t care if he died.

He doesn’t look away from the Widow in front of him. He can’t bring himself to look at his brothers, falling silent as they stand behind him.

“Stop this nonsense, Theseus.” Madame says. “Drop the scalpel and let Lyudmila conduct her tests.”

“Not my wings,” he hisses. “She can take what the fuck she likes but not them.”

“You’re in no position to bargain.”

No, he really isn’t.

But how can he choose between Eryn and his brothers?

He finally turns. Dream and his scar. Sapnap and his heat. George and his dark eyes. All of them look blank, rewritten, wiped. He wonders what they think is happening right now, wonders what they see.

Tears build in his eyes.

He doesn't want to fight them. He's always hated that about the Room, the fact he has to hurt the people he cares about, even when he was never supposed to care about anyone.

Before him stand his brothers, his flock. They've saved him so many times.

But the whole reason they're his flock, the whole reason he's alive right now, is because of Eryn.

His first friend. The kill that never leaves him. His ledger, dripping red.

Tommy is so tired.

He wants Phil.

He wants all of this to stop.

He wants to go home and tell his therapist that this was a nightmare.

"I'm sorry," he apologises. He'll never stop apologising to them.

Or fighting for what he believes in. He left them to get out, knowing it might lead to their deaths. He abandoned the men that saved him.

So, with a heavy heart and aching limbs and black spots in his vision and blood dripping down his back, he looks at his brothers and rushes past them to get to Madame.

He doesn't get far.

Dream grabs him. Sapnap swipes the legs out from under him. George nearly breaks his hand to take the scalpel from him.

Tommy thrashes, remembering the many times Eret had them fight before.

They were pulling their punches then, and Tommy was healthier, stronger, not half-dead and already wounded.

"No, no, no," he begs, struggles against Dream's impossibly tight grip. It's not one of comfort like he's used to, it's constricting and painful on his aching ribs. "Let go! Let me go!"

He jabs a foot back, wraps an arm around Dream's head and throws him, making them both stagger. Sapnap is quick to rush him and Tommy jerks back, smashing a flat palm into Sapnap's nose so it'll break.

But then George is there, all lithe muscle and calculating eyes.

He doesn't hesitate to slam a fist into Tommy's neck, a kick to his kidneys. Tommy wheezes as he chokes and George twists himself so that he can grab Tommy and flip him.

Tommy hits the white tiles harshly, breath whooshing out of his lungs.

But Tommy isn't a survivor for nothing.

Twenty-eight to one.

Twenty-eight to watching countless classmates die, to killing Eryn, to killing Hannah, to watching agents be used for target practice.

Twenty-eight to him being the Huntsman Spider.

He kicks at George's shins and then curls his body to catch him as he tumbles, smacking his skull into the tile below. He's quick to rise to his feet on unsteady legs.

Sapnap grabs him, too-hot hands burning (not warming, not comforting, not keeping him from the cold) on his shoulders as he tries to wrestle him to ground. Tommy jabs at his ribs but then Dream is there.

Green eyes meet icy blue.

Dream punches Tommy straight in the face.

He's reminded, as Sapnap finally wrestles him to ground, of the training exercise he stood in when Dream was teaching the recruits. He'd hit him like that, and Tommy had waited like a good spider before he could reset it. He didn't wince, didn't flinch. Just waited.

Huntsman Spiders don't feel pain after all.

But Tommy doesn't feel like a Huntsman Spider as his brothers cage him in, grips rough and unrelenting.

He would say he feels like a child but he's never been one of those. He doesn't know what being like that - innocent, vulnerable - feels like.

"See, Theseus," Madame says. "That wasn't so hard, was it?"

"They're struggling," Grigor comments, idly. "Their bond is extremely strong."

"But your ability is stronger," Lyudmila says, reassuringly. "Get them to take him back to his room. I need to check his status before continuing my work."

Tommy feels them change their grips and then he's lifted up. He sees them watching him, still backed down the hallway.

"You told me you had this under control," the man says to Madame. He's surprised to see her straighten, turning her full attention to him. So he's not just important, he's very important.

"This has been our first incident, General--"

"Oh," Tommy says, words slurring as he interrupts her, gaining their attention again. His brothers pause. "Dreykov. The bastard who wants to run the Department."

"Hello, Theseus," General Dreykov greets. He tilts his head. "I've heard so many things about you but seeing this... display has made me reconsider what I've heard. I wonder if

you've heard stories about me."

"Nothing on you, fucker." Tommy spits and Dreykov's lips twitch.

"You should know me although I suppose your Handler never gave you the names of your hits, did he?"

Tommy freezes. Madame once again turns to Dreykov. "We're doing everything in our power to find that man but with that mind reading woman, Alyssa, moving before we can get her and her accomplice, we can't track him down--"

Dreykov's hand slaps the wall. They all flinch, even Tommy's brainwashed brothers and the Widows, even Madame. They all brace for a hit.

"That's not good enough!" He shouts. "I've wanted that man for years for what he did to Sveta!"

Tommy's blood runs cold. His eyes widen. "You don't mean..." Tommy whispers.

"Clara and I got into an argument," Dreykov informs him after a long moment of glaring at Madame. "Dealing with the Department is a security risk so my daughter grew up under the care of agents I trusted. Clara wanted to test you and your Handler--" He spits the words and Tommy once again flinches.

He swallows, says quietly in the ringing silence, "Mr. Cicle told me to send a message."

Dreykov's laugh is harsh. "Well, it certainly left an impression when I found my daughters dead, half-burnt body with her pinky finger gone. At her birthday party!"

Tommy shakes. The adrenaline crash. The pain from the cuts at his back. The ache in his bones. The blood loss making his head fuzzy. The fact his brothers are restraining him. The knowledge he killed General Dreykov's daughter because his Handler and the woman were in cahoots.

"General," Madame tries to pacify but the man shakes his head.

"I have no issue with your God - or should I say, grandson? - Bohdana. He's a weapon, nothing more. Can't fault a gun for firing when someone is pulling the trigger." He waves at Grigor and Lyudmila. "Go. I have no use for him when he's in this state. Come, Bohdana, we still have things to discuss despite this interruption."

Tommy is dragged down the hallway by his brothers, over the dead bodies he's left behind, and away from the all white room. He closes his eyes when he loses sight of Madame.

They take him back to the room he first woke up in and are not gentle when they strap him down onto the bed.

Tommy doesn't try to fight them.

He's exhausted.

But he does watch them follow after Grigor like obedient dogs being called to heel.

“Have you learnt your lesson?” Doctor Kudrin asks and he laughs in her face.

“You try to fuck with my wings and I’ll do this again.”

Her head tilts and she sighs. “You’re going to make me use the good drugs to sedate you?”

“Touch my wings and die, bitch.”

She sighs again but leaves him. He blinks the tears from his eyes and lets unconsciousness flood his veins.

(When he wakes he’s back on the metal table, only this time, instead of taking his blood, she’s inserting an IV into his arm.

“Are those the good drugs, Doc?” He slurs and gets his answer soon enough when he blacks out.)

(He doesn’t know how long he’s like this: waking on the table, falling unconscious, being jolted back to consciousness only to float half-awake under the heavy drugs flooding his veins.

He just knows he’s tired.

And it’s a sweet relief from his conflicting thoughts and the pain of his body.)

Ranboo is taken away as usual at the usual time. Tubbo goes into the vents the minute the door closes, goes back to the office room. He drops down when no one approaches and powers up the computer. He searches for the link of the security cameras. He clicks on it and starts scrolling through the screens.

Most of the building is empty but Tubbo is able to see the women dancing again.

He scrolls more and nearly misses movement on one screen. He clicks back, sees a dorm room, the back of Sean’s head (evident by the top-bun) as he exits. Tubbo clicks through until he finds the group of men walking down a corridor, taking a sharp left and-

Tubbo freezes, swallows.

There’s a cage in the middle of the room. A large one. Big, metal bars from floor to ceiling. Around the cage, people stand, conversing.

And there, walking towards the cage, are the Huntsman Spiders. They’re wrapping their hands and Tubbo’s stomach drops.

He can’t turn away though.

Something is compelling him to watch.

Just to be sure.

It only takes a few minutes before Sykunno steps into the cage, George following behind.

Tubbo switches channels the minute George lunges forward, bile climbing up his throat.

He has to remind himself that they were all there. They're alive. They've trained to fight like this, to fight and live.

And now he knows where they are. With Corpse's touch-based ability, Tubbo is almost certain he can throw enough memories at him to get Corpse to snap out of it.

Plus, he has his whistle.

Still, he needs to find Tommy and Ranboo.

He clicks through and there-

In a white room, a metal chair is bolted to the floor, a projector playing in front of it. Ballet dancers: rising and falling.

And on that chair, Ranboo sits. Beside him, the Professor has two fingers pressed to Ranboo's temple.

So this version of the Room doesn't have a chair. It doesn't need to. Not when they have someone who can rewrite their memories.

Tubbo swallows more bile before flicking through more channels.

He nearly vomits when he eventually finds Tommy.

Lying on a metal table, strapped down. His eyes are open but dull. Blood pools beneath his body and even though he's wearing a shirt and sweatpants, Tubbo can see the bumps and dips and slashes through his skin.

Biopsies.

Biopsies while he's awake.

Tubbo was going to wait.

He was going to form a plan.

But this? This can't wait. Tommy needs him.

And Tommy is in no position to fight his way to freedom. He looks on the verge of death.

So Tubbo reorders his plan, edits it until he's confident he can at least get Corpse to snap awake.

With that, he closes the computer, flies up to the vent and begins to move towards Ranboo.

In his pocket, Phil's phone vibrates. He sighs, shifts forward in his seat to pull it out.

Before him, the kingpins of three large gangs from Eastern Europe watch him warily. Some of their advisors are sweating. A few of their bodyguards look ready to bolt.

"You know," Wilbur speaks, sitting atop the mahogany table, reclining with an elegance that is both purposeful and sly. Wilbur has always been the best at gaining attention to himself but just as good as getting it to slide right off him.

Techno is built like a tank, and looks like he could easily walk through a wall with ease. Wilbur doesn't look like a threat, which always makes him more of one. Everyone knows not to anger a lion but very few people remember snakes and spiders have the venom capable of killing people with a single bite.

"I would've thought you'd be aware of someone else moving into your turf." Wilbur tilts his head, makes the light of the office Phil has rented for this occasion hit the scars on his face. From acid and a sewing needle. The thought has anger building in Phil's chest before he roughly pushes it down.

He lifts his phone to his face, ignoring the denials from the men in front of him.

Phil hasn't made his rounds through the many crime rings in years. He hasn't needed to. People knew who the Angel of Death was. People now know who Odin is.

But his sons are missing and there's a very dangerous man hunting them.

Phil's not playing around anymore. His name will be heard once again and he'll either get answers or his crows will have something to eat.

He's already covered most of Europe. He plans to continue here and then turn back to America. Remind them all who they're dealing with.

If he's bored, he'll find amusement on the other continents.

He barely has a chance to look at his email - noting the foreign email address and hundreds of attachments - when his phone rings.

Trigger.

He waves the gangs away, stands as Techno immediately ushers them out.

"What's wrong?" He asks. Sam hasn't called him since Pandora's Vault. Sam would only call if there's an emergency.

"Tubbo's in trouble." Sam replies, shortly. "He's emailed us both things regarding the Red Room. Pandora is scanning them and tracking a location."

“Fuck,” Phil mutters. “Karl told me Estonia but that giving me a specific location would fuck up the timeline.”

“Phil?” Techno asks, red eyes narrowed at him. “What’s going on?”

“Tubbo emailed Sam and I. He’s clearly in trouble.” Phil responds easily enough. “Both of you, go and see if those idiots know anything. If they don’t? Get them out of here. We need helpful leads.”

“On it,” Wilbur says and Techno spares him one last glance before following him out.

“Is it just the three of you?” Ponk asks. Phil must be on speaker. “If you’re going against the Red Room again, I’d get reinforcements.”

“We’re not alone.” Phil says. “Puffy had to think of Drista but the Las Nevadas lot are here. Plus Karl and Jack.”

“That’s good. Punz and Purpled both have good training. Plus Jack is ex-MI5.” Sam replies. There’s a pause and then, “He emailed me, Phil. Me. After... everything. It must be bad.”

“Then find me a location,” Phil says and finds himself sighing. He’s too old to be looking after both children and adults. Then again, he’s older than everyone he knows. Apart from his wife, of course. “Sam? For what it’s worth: I don’t hate you. Or dislike you. None of us do. I doubt the kids do either. Tommy’s... Frankly, he’s shit with emotions of any kind. I bet if you reach out, he will. And once he’s confirmed you’re safe, the other two will follow.”

There’s a long pause and then a soft, “Yeah, I’ll do that.”

“Hell yeah!” Ponk shouts.

The door opens. Techno has a smirk to his lips but his eyes look grim. “I think I have a location.”

The relief hits him like a tsunami. He hopes he won’t be too late. Not when his boys need him.

Chapter End Notes

Tubbo is on a mission and the Syndicate are coming to collect their boys :D

Also to clear up any confusion: Mr.Cicle (Tommy’s Handler) isn’t Charlie from Las Nevadas — this is a Warden and Sam, Billiam and Techno situation ;)

Chapter 31

Chapter Notes

And we're back!

TW// mention of medical experimentation, mention of vivisection, mention of injury and bodily harm, brainwashing, child abuse, mention of weaponry, mention of child death, swearing

Enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tubbo may be fighting to keep himself calm but his wings are fluttering and his antennae are pressed tightly to his head. He's scared. So, so scared.

Tommy isn't one to give up. Not when his friends and family are in danger. Yet he's lying somewhere in this facility, eyes open but blank. As if he's already come to terms with his death.

It makes the fear swiftly burn into anger.

Finding Ranboo takes a short amount of time now that Tubbo is somewhat aware of his surroundings after looking through the security cameras.

Looking down from the vents, Tubbo sees the Professor sitting beside Ranboo. Two fingers are pressed to Ranboo's temple as the Professor mumbles something in Russian.

Tubbo isn't fluent but he's been around the agents for a long time. He knows more than just the basics of the language. So he can understand the Professor when he talks about breaking and rebuilding.

"Like marble," he mutters. "You must be like marble."

Tubbo likes to think he's one of the most rational members of his chaotic family. He's not impulsive or quick to anger. He sees the world for what it is and plans accordingly.

Yet in the span of a year, his entire world has been thoroughly pushed off its axis.

Tubbo's mother is a civilian who fell in love with a Huntsman Spider. Said Spider did everything he could to keep Tubbo away from the Red Room, only for Alexei - a machine the Room used for the 'messier jobs' - to kill his mother.

And now, after Billiam, Tubbo has Life running through his veins. His ageing will slow and stop. Like the rest of his family, he'll be frozen in time. Something Tommy, who saved his and Ranboo's lives, still has immense guilt over.

Tubbo, before all of this, would consider his possibilities to handle the situation before him.

Tubbo isn't that boy from before.

Tubbo is angry, practically seething.

So with little fanfare, he opens the vent, slips out and onto the Professor's shoulders. Before the man can shout or struggle, he tilts his wrist back, feels his stinger push through skin, and then shoves it into the Professor's neck.

The Professor jerks and Tubbo, using what Tommy and Niki have taught him in the Syndicate's gym, tightens his legs around the man's neck, tips his body backwards, and sends them both crashing to the ground. It's not as clean as Tommy and Niki can pull off but Tubbo has no need for his fighting to be polished. He just needs the man away from Ranboo and dead.

Tubbo stands on shaky legs - shock, he thinks, as this is the first person he's killed, really killed, not like those zombie boys that Tommy knew - and looks down at the Professor. Blood pools from his neck as he spasms from Tubbo's venom in his veins. The spasms stop with one last jerk. His body stills.

The man is away from Ranboo and dead. Tubbo swallows, tears his eyes from the corpse so that he can look at Ranboo.

He freezes when their eyes meet.

Ranboo watched him murder a man.

"Hey, Ranboo." Tubbo says, softly. "Do you know what I am?"

"Tubbo," Ranboo says. He looks awed. "You killed him."

Tubbo nods. "I did."

"For me."

"For you," Tubbo agrees. His hands shake when he holds them in front of himself in a surrender. "Are you okay?"

Ranboo blinks. "Are you?"

Tubbo snorts. "Touché."

He holds out a hand. Ranboo grabs it. Tubbo helps him from the chair. They both step over the body.

“Everything’s a little fuzzy right now.” Ranboo tells him. “I don’t know how much help I’ll be but I’m guessing you’re getting us out of here?”

Tubbo nods and then leans forward. Ranboo’s arms curl around his back, carefully minding his wings. Tubbo stands there for a long moment, face pressed to Ranboo’s shoulder.

A second to reorient himself. A second to simply exist.

He sighs, thinks of the image he saw of Tommy. Pulls himself together and then pulls back from Ranboo, who lets him go but keeps one hand on his shoulder.

“I have a plan,” Tubbo says. “First we find Corpse. Then we get Tommy. Then the Widows.”

“Not that I don’t trust you but... what’s the likelihood that this doesn’t work?”

Tubbo laughs, smiles up at Ranboo. There’s a blankness clinging to the outer edges of Ranboo’s eyes, like the brainwashing is refusing to leave.

He can sort that out later when they’re safe.

“About fifty percent,” Tubbo says, smile widening when Ranboo sighs.

“Oh, well. Remember I want alliums on my grave.” Ranboo looks up at the vent. “Together?”

Tubbo nods. “Together.”

Tubbo flies up to the vent and turns his head to watch Ranboo use the chair to jump up and leverage himself up.

“Lead the way.”

Tubbo does. He heads to where his mental floor plan tells him the other agents are.

For that time, from finding Ranboo to getting to where they need to go, Tubbo is in a state of sharp calmness. He has a feeling the minute he knows he’s safe, he’s going to have a breakdown.

He’s killed a man.

He did it as easily as breathing.

Just like how Ranboo killed Alexei.

Maybe, he wonders as he turns a corner, being a killer is ingrained in his DNA. The Red Room, forever lingering, hovering in his peripheral vision. He never had to escape it because he was never there but Ranboo escaped, and Tommy, a long time later, escaped and burnt it to the ground.

Yet they’re all dangerous.

Ranboo and Tubbo grew up with a crime boss as a father so maybe it's both nature and nurture that's at fault.

He feels detached from himself.

Is this what Tommy felt like his entire childhood? Doing what needed to be done to survive and having to ignore the consequences?

It hurts.

It makes Tubbo want to cry.

It makes Tubbo want Phil here.

Tubbo shakes his head when he sees the vent opening, clearing his mind. He has to focus. When he is safe, he can sort out all of these complicated feelings.

"Corpse?" Ranboo asks and Tubbo nods.

He doesn't let himself think or pause.

He simply removes the vent cover, does a brief scan of the room - Sykunno against Dream, bruised knuckles and bloody lips, Sapnap rolling his shoulder, George taping up his hands, Sean setting a broken nose, Corpse watching with an air of indifference - and then drops down.

There's a moment when all of the Huntsman Spiders freeze and snap their heads over. A moment when the rest of the people in the room don't realise.

Tubbo lunges for Corpse, grabbing his wrist in a tight grip. "Help," he hisses, trying to bring up as many happy memories as he can to overwhelm Corpse.

Corpse simply tilts his head. "Tubbo," he says, calmly as the room falls silent, all eyes on them. "You shouldn't be here."

"Tommy's dying." Tubbo snaps as Ranboo drops to the ground behind him.

Corpse meets his eyes. They're not blank at all. Almost as if he's not under the Professor's control.

"Tubbo," he says again. "You should go."

From there, it's a mess.

Guards grab at him, ripping his touch from Corpse. He thrashes, panicked and scared. Ranboo is in a similar state, being herded to a corner by men with batons.

Corpse moves, too. He edges towards Sean, fingertips brushing a forearm.

Tubbo looks away, to Sapnap, George and Dream. All with blank eyes.

So Tubbo uses the only weapon in his arsenal.

Back when Tubbo was first adopted by Phil, when the world was too big and too frightening and he was terrified of being sent back to that orphanage, Phil sat him down and told him that if he ever needed help, if he was stuck and scared, he should do anything he could to get attention. He should scream and shout and sob. Use his nails and teeth, spit and hiss and beg. Wilbur taught him to use his words as a weapon and Techno taught him to use his body.

But most of all, he was taught that if Tubbo ever needed his brothers, his dad, they would be there.

Because nothing is stronger than a family's love.

So Tubbo looks at Tommy's brothers and whistles. Tommy's low whistle. One George taught him. Long, and sharp, and haunting.

Immediately, three heads snap up, fog clearing from blank eyes.

Then, with fire and fierceness, they move as one. Dream slams Sykunno to the bars and Corpse grabs him by the back of his neck. The fog once again lifts while Sean starts snapping necks.

Sapnap's hands are alight when he pulls the men from Tubbo, blocking him with his body. George focuses on the men next to Ranboo, only for Ranboo to move like him, like a Huntsman.

Tubbo is both impressed and slightly scared.

Now both of his best friends are badasses.

"Tubbo?" Dream is the one to speak when the men are dead or unconscious. "What are--"

"Tommy is dying." Tubbo interrupts, heading to the door. "I couldn't wait any longer."

"You've been planning this?" Sykunno asks with a grin.

"Good for you, kid." Corpse says, patting his head, being mindful to not hit his antennae. Sapnap slides in front of Tubbo before he can open the door and goes first.

"How bad?" George asks. The corridors seem empty. Tubbo hopes they can get to Tommy without too much fighting.

"Bad." Tubbo says. "I think he's only alive because of- ya know." He swallows, meets George eyes briefly before looking away. "I think they've been cutting him open."

All of them wince, hissing through clenched teeth.

"He is alive, right?" Sapnap asks, quietly.

Tubbo nods. "His eyes were open and I could see his chest moving."

The collective sigh of relief would be comical if the circumstances weren't so dire.

"Are you sure you want to actually see him like that?" Dream questions, a hand pressing to Tubbo's shoulder.

He nods again. "He's my friend."

That's all he says. That's all he has to say.

They turn a corner and Tubbo points to the door. Sapnap once again goes first.

"Do you know where the Widows are?" Corpse asks.

"Down the hall, turn right and there should be a bunch of ballet rooms." Tubbo tells him. "They're in one of them."

Corpse, Sykunno and Sean turn away.

Sapnap opens the door. Ranboo steps closer to Tubbo.

The room is all white and sterile. Tommy is strapped onto a metal cot in the middle of the room. His wrists and ankles are restrained and there's a needle in his arm, connected to a bag that's filling up with blood. There's only a few spots of gold.

He's bloody and bruised, covered in cuts both deep and shallow.

A woman looks up from the desk she's sitting in at the back of the room. Beside her, in a fridge with a glass door, labelled pots sit with what look like sections of skin, sinew and bone inside of them. Her eyes widen in fear the minute she sees them.

Sapnap and George move instantly. Ranboo grips Tubbo's hand, tightly, desperately.

"I'll handle her," George says, roughly. "You burn anything that's his."

Dream rushes to Tommy. Gentle hands lift Tommy's limp head. "Tommy?" Dream keeps repeating as George cuts into the woman (he'll later say that a bullet to the head would be too kind) and Sapnap's hands burst into flames. "Can you open your eyes for me? Theseus?"

Tommy barely stirs.

Dream's face becomes pinched. "Little Spider?" He whispers in Russian, voice soft but commanding, and Tommy's eyes crack open. He hums an affirmative. "Little Spider, open your eyes."

Tommy opens his eyes.

Dream rustles his hair affectionately before ripping the restraints off.

"Can you stand?" He asks, voice strained.

Tommy tries. He pushes himself up and then promptly collapses as his knees buckle. Dream catches him, lifts him with an arm under his knees and an arm wrapped around his back.

Like this, despite his height and lanky limbs, he looks small, like a vulnerable child seeking comfort from an older brother.

“You need to stay awake.” Dream breathes as Tommy rests his head on Dream’s shoulder.

“It’s hard,” Tommy murmurs back. “M’tired.”

Dream’s face is both concerned and angry. He looks like a wild animal protecting a young cub, all viciousness and protectiveness mixed together.

“I know.” Dream says, voice so soft it sounds strange from him. “Tell me- tell me something.”

“Like what?” Tommy whispers, voice growing fainter.

“Little Spider, tell me anything.” Dream commands.

Maybe it’s the damage he’s endured. Maybe it’s the cocktail of drugs running through his system. Maybe it’s the blood loss or the biopsies or the fact he’s barely alive.

Either way, Tommy opens his mouth and the following words leave Tubbo numb.

“I should’ve saved you.” Tommy murmurs into Dream’s neck. “I should’ve- should’ve come back for you.”

“You got out, Tommy.” Dream reassures as George and Sapnap step closer, their jobs done, and for a second, a single second, Tubbo can see them in a different universe as two brothers.

Two brothers, with the same light hair, the same attitude. Two brothers, who care so much but try to hide it. Two brothers, who are in pain but smile when the other looks at them.

“But I left you. All of you.” Tommy continues, voice pained. “I should’ve helped you. I could’ve.”

“Theseus,” Dream whispers back, eyes filled with agony. George is bowing his head. Sapnap looks close to tears.

“I’m so sorry,” Tommy says, half-sobs. “I’m sorry I wasn’t strong enough. I’m sorry I left you.”

“You saved yourself, you survived.” Dream says, after swallowing a few times. “You did good, little brother. I’m proud of you.”

“We all are.” George breathes.

“We really are.” Sapnap agrees, wiping his eyes.

Tommy hums, almost like he doesn't quite believe what they're saying. "I wanted you to know," Tommy says. "Just in case, you know. You deserve to know that I- that I thought about you and it hurt. It hurt knowing I left you. I didn't want to but I couldn't- she was going to--"

He starts hiccuping, body shaking. Dream holds him tighter, green eyes watery.

"You did the right thing, Theseus," he assures. "I'm so- we're so fucking glad you got out. You did what we had all been dreaming of."

"You'd been dreaming longer," Tommy hisses, cuddling closer, still shaking.

"If it meant your freedom? I would've dreamt for the rest of my life. However long that may be." Dream says, firmly, honestly. "Yes, we wanted to be there with you, but you got out. You did that. You saved yourself. You're my little brother, Theseus. I'd take a bullet for you. Living under the Red Room was hell. But it's a hell I'd live through for you."

Tommy untucks his head, tear-filled blue eyes, overspilling like waves on a shore, meet unwavering green. "You mean it?" Tommy asks, in hushed Russian.

"Pinky promise." Dream replies, wiggling his hand under Tommy's knees for Tommy to latch a pinky onto his.

"Absolutely," George and Sapnap agree simultaneously.

Tommy's face scrunches up before he throws himself back into Dream's shoulder. He's shuddering, gasping as he cries - an action Tubbo doesn't remember ever being a witness to - making little chirping trills, arms cinching around Dream's neck.

It looks uncomfortably tight and restrictive, something none of the agents Tubbo knows likes very much. Too much like the Room, they always tell him. Too much like their freedom being stolen from them once again.

But Dream doesn't look phased whatsoever.

George and Sapnap step closer so every step has them brushing sleeves with each other but other than that, they're not overly tense.

Dream simply grips Tommy tighter, tucking his chin down onto Tommy's head so that he's curled up there, safely hidden away from the world. Safe in his brother's embrace. Safe, surrounded by his other brothers, including Tubbo and Ranboo, because Tubbo is over simply referring to Tommy as his best friend.

They're brothers in everything but blood.

And Tommy is breaking. Not for the first time. But openly. His vulnerability is something he's always worn as a shield, as armour, as a weapon he can use to strike down his enemies.

Tubbo has seen Tommy weaponise his fear before.

But this is something else entirely.

This is a boy, who has spent his entire life doing nothing but trying to survive in a world that won't stop pushing him, punishing him for simply existing.

This is a boy, who laughs in the face of pain, who goads anyone and everyone, who steps in front of Tubbo and Ranboo whenever there is a threat.

This is a boy. This is not an assassin. This is not a child soldier. This is not a Huntsman Spider.

This is a boy who is tired and fearful and sobbing under guilt he has no reason to feel.

This is Tommy. Tubbo's second friend. His best friend. His brother. Tommy, who insults with his heart and holds Henry the cow with a reverence that shows his childhood trauma in every unsettling light.

So Tubbo takes a moment to study the bruises and blood and tears and sweat covering Tommy. Then he dutifully looks away, hand squeezing Ranboo's. Tommy is trusting them with this. Tubbo refuses to break that trust.

He looks away, doesn't focus on the soft cries or the soft murmurs of Dream, George and Sapnap.

He simply turns away and starts walking, promising himself that he'll do more. Tommy has already saved them enough.

It's about time someone saves him, too.

They leave the white room burning. Tubbo leads them, hand tight in Ranboo's grip. They turn around a corridor and the other Spiders are with the Widows. Not only the ones Tubbo knows but also the women who probably grew up in this place. Behind those women are younger girls.

Niki takes one look at Tommy, curled tight against Dream, and her eyes darken and narrow.

"She's dead." Sapnap murmurs.

"Madame isn't," Minx says.

"Then we find her when I know he's not going to bleed to death," George replies. He looks to Corpse, inclines his head to the women and girls.

"I've got them." Corpse assures.

"Then let's go." Rae says, looking at Tommy. "He needs medical attention."

"He'll get it." Dream reassures.

“We really should leave,” Brooke says, frowning at something behind them. Tubbo turns his head and sighs. Smoke is spilling out from the gap in the door. “Soon this entire building will be on fire.”

“What?” Sapnap snaps when they all turn to him. “It needed to be burnt!”

“We didn’t need to be!” Tina giggles but the sound is hollow, fake, trying to lighten the mood.

“I couldn’t find an exit,” Tubbo tells them. “So I don’t know-“

“There’s a ladder that leads to a tile you can move. That opens up to the gallery above.” One of the women says. “I can lead you but I don’t know how you’ll get the boy up there.”

“Leslie?” Sykunno asks and Leslie steps up.

“I can portal us outside of the gallery or do you have a specific place you’d like to go?” Leslie asks, nodding to Tommy. “Portalling him a lot could do some damage.”

Tubbo blinks at her. “Really?”

“It’s like teleporting. Your body is being pulled apart and put back together when you step through.” Her eyes soften when she turns back to Tommy. “If he’s already injured, doing it a lot can really hurt him.”

“Take us outside, we’ll go from there.” Dream says, digs his chin into Tommy’s head. “Little Spider?”

“M’awake.” Tommy mumbles and some tension leaves all of their shoulders. Hardened assassins soften when they look to him and Tubbo realises how deeply they care.

He knows they consider each other friends, some consider each other family. But those looks? Those are looks of love, of fear due to his injuries, of anger at him getting them.

Leslie clasps her hands in front of her and then slowly pulls them apart. A portal flickers between her hands, growing wider and wider.

Together, they leave the burning Red Room behind.

In a cafe, sipping hot green tea, the man sees sudden movement from the gallery across the street. In a blink of an eye, multiple people appear from thin air.

The man grins. He picks up his bag, gulps the last of his tea and leaves with a ringing of a bell above the door.

As he walks across the street, he takes out the gun from his bag, and the silencer from one of the inside pockets. He quickly screws it on, not looking away from the agents walking towards the park.

Good. Hidden from onlookers. Open enough that he doesn't have to restrain his power.

He can feel it build inside of him as he walks closer.

This is going to be fun.

Tommy is tired. Everything hurts and the only reason he's awake is because Dream refuses to let him sleep.

He drifts in a sea of nothingness, mind numb and burning every time Dream uses that trigger phrase. He's not angry, not when sleeping in this condition could very well be the last time he closes his eyes.

But he aches.

Everything aches. He's cold but sweating. His stomach rolls with hunger and nausea. His body is heavy.

The forest clings to him. He wishes to go back, hide there, ignore whatever is happening around him.

He wants to reassure Tubbo and Ranboo, his brothers. Tell them he's alright. He's a God, he will be fine.

But Tommy is too tired to try and lie.

So instead of doing anything, he keeps his face tucked into Dream's neck and tries to keep himself awake. He counts to one hundred in multiple languages, reminding himself to keep his breathing as level and as calm as Dream's.

And then Dream stops.

Stills.

Arms drop from holding Tommy and his arms tighten around Dream's neck as his legs drop to the ground.

He nearly falls.

Blearily, still holding onto Dream so that he doesn't collapse, he turns and finds a man watching him.

There's a gun pointed at his forehead.

Tommy is so tired.

"You must be Theseus," the man says. He's tall, well-built, with reddish brown hair. His eyes remind Tommy of Sapnap's: burning like hot coals. "I've heard a lot about you."

“Niko Constantin, right?” Tommy breathes, words slightly slurred.

The man grins. It’s a wolffish smile. “Yes. Hello.”

“Hi.” Tommy replies, eyes drooping. “What’s your ability do?”

“Nightmare illusions.” Niko replies, nonchalantly. “They don’t affect you.”

“Mental abilities don’t.” Tommy says. “I’m just built different.”

He snorts at his own reference. Niko clearly doesn’t understand as his head tilts.

“I’m going to kill you now.” He says and Tommy nods, let’s go of Dream so that he can sit on the grass.

He realises they’re in a park. The road is hidden by the trees. Tommy smiles. He can almost imagine that he’s in his forest.

“Okay,” he agrees, easily. “One question though: who let you out of the gulag and gave you our files?”

“Bohdana.” Niko says, sounding unsure.

Tommy hums. “Can’t believe grandma wants me dead so bad. Fuck her, am I right?” He closes his eyes. “When you kill the others, make it quick. Dead man’s wishes and all that.”

Tommy waits.

He knows the feeling of a gunshot wound.

He wonders if his God powers will wake him up or if the blood, bone and skin samples have bled him dry.

He waits.

Nothing happens.

He cracks open an eye. Niko is staring at him, eyes wide and mouth agape.

Tommy opens his other eye and frowns. “What?”

“You’re not- you’re supposed to fight me!”

“Bitch boy, I’ve been vivisected.” Tommy says, shifting so he can lift up his shirt and show the man the scars lining his stomach and ribs. “I do not have the energy to try and fight you.”

“You’re a Huntsman Spider!”

“And?” Tommy sighs, dropping his shirt. “I’m a fucking person and I’m fucking tired. I’m not their weapon. I’m not their machine. I’m not their child soldier. Not anymore. Why else do you think I’ve been killing them all?”

“But...” Niko looks so lost. Tommy doesn’t have the energy to feel pity for him but he understands.

“Do you even want to do this?” Tommy asks, tiredly. “They made you into this and you’re still following their orders. Why?”

“The Wolf Spider Program was shut down but then you all come along and they restart it under a different name.” Niko hisses. Tommy notes how his hand is shaking on the gun. “They got rid of me but you- they wanted you.”

“Ah, you’re angry because instead of being used, they used other people.” Tommy mutters. “How admirable of you.”

“What?”

Tommy looks at him. “You’re being used, man. We all are. I’m done playing their little soldier. You clearly aren’t. And look, it’s shitty, but I get it. They conditioned us to be reliant on them, to want their praise and attention. Didn’t matter who or how many people we killed.” Tommy drags a hand down his face. “I got them all out. Eventually. I got to be free and you’re out now but you’re still listening to them. Instead of hurting the ones who hurt you, you’re turning on people who understand you.”

“You understand nothing!” Niko snarls, stepping closer. “I was in the isolation chamber for years! Years! And when I was finally released, they sent me to a gulag with a shoot-on-sight order. Bohdana freed me-“

“Why did you never escape?” Tommy murmurs, interrupting him. “We both know no prisons could ever hope to hold us.”

Niko opens his mouth and then closes it, eyes wide. They both know why.

The Red Room didn’t need to have barbed wire fences or guard towers. They didn’t need to have any restrictions on them really. The guards were just there in case of emergencies.

The Room didn’t need any of that because by five years old, their weapons were housetrained. They knew their place, where they stood in the pecking order, in the food chain: at the very bottom.

The agents didn’t need to be collared or handcuffed to know they were owned, that escape was futile.

They either survived the Room or left in a body bag, dumped in frozen ground, in an unmarked grave.

“A dog released from a cage with a leash on isn’t free.” Tommy blinks at him. “When I got out, I was free but my wings were still clipped. As spiders, we always forget we can be trapped in other webs.”

Niko’s free hand grips his hair. He’s frantic, confused. “You know nothing!”

“Okay, cool. Kill me then.” Tommy shrugs. “I told you: I’m done playing their games. I’m fucking tired. I don’t want to do this anymore. I don’t want to wonder how much red is in my ledger.”

Tommy once again closes his eyes, leaning so his head is resting against Sapnap’s hip.

He waits.

A minute passes.

Then a warm hand drops to his head. He blinks his eyes open and looks up to Sapnap’s face, his eyebrows raised.

“Tommy?” George asks, pointedly, sharply.

“That’s Niko Constantin.” Tommy says, waving his hand to where Niko is standing a few yards away. The gun is gone. “He’s a bitch but he’s depressed so I guess it’s fine. Also his power is nightmares so any shit you just saw? Didn’t happen, you’re all good.”

“You’re more coherent,” George comments but the concerned edge is gone from his voice and Tommy lazily flips him off.

“I’ve just had to talk us all out of our deaths so fuck you.”

“So,” Sean says, as Dream offers his hand and pulls Tommy up to stand. “Are we killing this guy or not?”

“I think someone’s going to beat you to it,” Tubbo mutters and Tommy turns just enough to see a car pull up and Phil get out.

(He doesn’t notice Niko slipping away, blending into the trees, disappearing from sight. He doesn’t notice the way the agents share a look and let him go.)

His mind notes the other car. Wilbur, Techno, Grian, Punz, Purpled, Quackity and Karl are all here.

But Tommy can only focus on Phil as Tubbo and Ranboo charge him, latching on in a quick, tight hug before Tubbo is flying at Wilbur and Ranboo is getting a head pat from Techno.

A low, pained trill leaves Tommy’s lips.

Phil and Grian snap to attention.

Phil practically runs up to Tommy, who staggers forward - Dream has to grab him so he doesn’t face-plant the grass - so that he can meet him half-way. Tommy barely has time to study his posh-looking suit before he’s in his arms, relieved chirps spilling out.

“Hey, hey. It’s okay. I’m here.” Phil starts murmuring. He makes these short chirps of his own, ones that calm Tommy quicker than expected. “You’re okay.”

“They tried to cut- cut them out.” Tommy hisses, pressing closer. “They kept- kept playing these stupid fucking noises but it was- wasn’t you.”

Phil’s arms tighten around him. “You mean your wings, mate?”

Tommy nods, trill caught in his throat. Phil lets out more chirps, one hand rising to pet at the back of his head.

“They didn’t- I wouldn’t-“

“It’s okay,” Phil says, and if Tommy were more coherent, he would be able to hear how Phil is reeling in all of his emotions to sound as calm as possible. “Breathe, Tommy. In. Hold it. Out. Good. In, out.”

He doesn’t notice Wilbur asking about the women and girls, the following brief explanation from Tubbo and Sapnap’s wave to the now burning gallery. He doesn’t notice Dream telling them about how Madame B. is still out there.

All he notices is Phil’s warm hold, the steady rise and fall of his chest.

He lets himself be picked up in his arms, let’s Wilbur and Techno fuss around him while Quackity makes some phone calls in the background to some medical professionals.

“I don’t want to do this anymore,” Tommy mumbles into Phil’s neck. “I just want to go home.”

He doesn’t hear his response. Exhaustion pulls him into the darkness and Tommy falls unconscious, knowing he’s finally safe in his dad’s arms.

Chapter End Notes

The brotherly bond my beloved :’)

And now: healing approaches!

Chapter 32

Chapter Notes

So! News!

I have finished writing this fic!!! Which means... *drum roll please* regular updates until the end!

TW// mention of child abuse, mention of brainwashing, mention of graphic injuries including vivisection and scars, death, minor character death, blood, graphic depiction of injury, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

In the end, Ponk is the one to check Tommy over. Leslie opens two portals, both to L'Manberg. One from Tartu and one from Pandora's Vault.

Most of the agents file out, taking the women and girls with them to get them to the orphanage. The deprogrammers Phil has on speed dial are called.

Dream, George and Sapnap stay. As does Niki, who Jack firmly stays with, fussing around her like he hasn't seen her in years instead of days.

After a couple of minutes, Ponk approaches where they're surrounding the table. None of them can sit.

Tubbo is the one to ask, "How bad is it?"

Ponk runs a hand through his curly, white hair. "Not good," he admits. "He seems to have healed any deep wounds but there's so many cuts and dips where flesh and bone have been taken."

"His wings?" Phil asks.

"His back is a mess but it doesn't look like they damaged his wings. They reopened the scars there and in normal cases, I'd say he'd be lucky with nerve damage and not paralysis. But he's healing. And he's a God. So I don't know." Ponk shrugs. "I've got him on a drip and monitoring him is the only step forward."

"He's going to be okay?" Sapnap asks, quietly, not quite meeting Ponk's eyes.

“I’ll be blunt with you: without whatever the hell is running through his veins, he’d be dead.” Ponk says. “They vivisected him. Thank God, they didn’t decide to take entire organs but the cuts, while precise, are brutal and normally would lead to infection. Not to mention his blood count is extremely low, which isn’t helping him. But he’ll live.”

“Anything else?” Phil asks and wonders if he looks as old as he is.

“Let him sleep but if he wakes, keep him on soups and broths. Try to get him to move about by himself.” He meets Phil’s eyes. “Don’t rush him but he needs to get his wings out. You’ll be better informed than me on whether they’re healthy or not.”

Relief slowly builds in Phil.

Tommy is okay. His son is alive and while not in the best shape, he should be fine.

“He’s always been a survivor,” George murmurs. Dream’s lips quirk. Sarnap snorts. The tension in the room breaks.

Ponk points at the three men. “From what I can gather, your medical help in that shithole was terrible so don’t make him feel bad if he’s weak or can’t do things. I’ll hunt you down myself.”

“What about the Hippocratic Oath?” Techno drawls and Ponk simply narrows his eyes.

“Non-existent if he’s hurt.” Ponk may only have one hand and the overall personality of a loveable puppy but the stare he gives them is icy. “I’ve been working for the Syndicate for years. I know how to get away with murder.”

“And suddenly I feel the need to take a walk and buy you a gift basket!” Wilbur says, loudly, with a clap of his hands. He theatrically looks at his empty wrist. “Oh would you look at the time!”

Wilbur bows low, and then spins on his heel, power-walking to the door. Techno catches him by the back of his jacket, swinging him back.

“If Ponk starts his murdering spree, we will enjoy it.” Techno says, calmly.

The exasperated but fearful look in Wilbur’s eyes makes him chuckle. Phil sighs. His boys, he swears.

“Who is taking first watch?” He asks and then shakes his head when Dream steps forward. “No. You three need rest. He’ll be okay with one of us. Right, Ponk?”

Ponk nods. Dream widens his eyes as if trying for a puppy-dog stare. George and Sarnap are quick to follow. It’s a little scary.

“Sad eyes stopped working on me by the time Tubbo was seven.” Phil says and they all narrow their eyes to a glare.

Definitely scarier.

But Phil has faced battlefields of men. Three Huntsman Spiders, no matter how skilled, are nothing compared to that.

“I’ll watch him.” Techno offers. “Wilbur will help you deal with the Widows and baby Widows.”

“Let’s hope some of them have families searching like the other girls.” Wilbur murmurs.

Phil nods, agreeing. He then turns his back to where Ponk is and let’s his wings push through his skin and spread wide. He can always buy another suit.

He steps closer to Dream, George and Sapnap, fluffs up his feathers. They all take a hasty step back. With his wings like this, his feathers nearly touch the walls.

“I want you to shower, eat something and sleep for at least five hours.” He narrows his eyes. “Each of you. Before I see any of you. Understand?”

“I’m getting the strong urge to say that you’re not our dad.” Sapnap mumbles but doesn’t drop his gaze.

Phil spreads his feathers, raises his wings and a single eyebrow. Once again, they all take a step back. Good, they have some self-preservation at least.

“Techno will be watching him. He’s surrounded by the people I trust with my life and medical professionals who know their shit. He is safe and he is healing. If that were to change, you’ll be quickly informed. But for now, he is okay.” He steps closer. “Go. He’s going to need you when he wakes up and you’re not help in this state.”

Dream doesn’t stop glaring. George is the one to look over Phil’s wings and ask Techno, “You’ll-“

“Yes.” Techno says without hesitation. “I know he’s your little brother but he’s mine too.”

Jack grabs Niki’s hand. “C’mon,” he says, quietly. “You need sleep, too.”

They all watch them leave and then, after a long moment of staring, Tommy’s brothers leave. George tugs Dream and sends a pointed stare to Sapnap to get him to move.

Phil relaxes his wings, runs a hand through his hair. “C’mon, Wil. The sooner we get this done, the sooner I can have a nap.”

Tommy wakes up in a field of cows, surrounded by trees. The sky is bright blue, with a few, scattered, white clouds. There are wildflowers beneath his hands and he is warm.

It’s shockingly quiet.

Peaceful.

Limbo.

He sits up, sees a figure beside him and smiles when he sees familiar black hair. Kristin. "I'm not dead, right?"

She smiles back, huffs a laugh. "No. Your body is resting though. You're here because your mind is safe."

"Oh." Tommy says. "Great."

He's quiet, hands in the grass, petting the flowers, eyes on the cows. He loves his limbo. It's so calm.

"I know you don't know a lot about my God powers," Tommy says, quietly. "But is it possible to track someone using them?"

Kristin considers him. "Tracking someone?"

"I don't want to kill someone with a tracking power when I can make do with what I have." Tommy explains.

"And who do you hope to track?"

"Madame B., my grandmother. Supposedly. I don't fucking know." He rubs at his eyes. "I'm so fucking tired. I just want all of this over."

"You don't want to be an assassin anymore?" Kristin asks, gently, and Tommy shakes his head.

"I know trying to be normal after the shit I went through is a joke but I do. I never wanted to be this in the first fucking place." He looks down at his hands, hands that have been stained with so much blood. "Ranboo has killed again. This time of his own free will. Tubbo... I think he has, too. I've heard some conversations but then I keep drifting."

Kristin frowns, runs a hand through her dark hair. "While I had hoped they wouldn't turn to the family business like my other sons, it is their choice."

"But why?" Tommy's voice cracks. He swallows. "Why choose this life?"

"I can't answer that," Kristin replies, truthfully. "I'm a God. I've been a God for a very long time. But as someone who is the God of Death, I can tell you that killing for some can be freeing. Those people they killed weren't good people. I'm not suggesting that murdering people is a good thing - I've encountered so many murdered souls and held them as gently as I could. But for people trapped in situations where survival is the only good outcome, sometimes killing is necessary."

"The wolf does not cry for the deer." Tommy murmurs.

"Exactly."

Tommy brings his knees up to his chest. “I just- look. I know I’m good at killing. I’m fucking fantastic at it but I’m so tired of running for my life, waiting for the knife in my back.”

“Did you like being a vigilante?”

Tommy snaps his head up, narrows his eyes. “How did you know that?”

She laughs. It’s a soft sound, a warm one. It makes him want to smile. “Tommy, I may not know everything but anything that involves my husband is my concern.”

He doesn’t remember telling her or feeling her presence.

He shrugs in response. “I liked being able to make my own decisions.”

He was running from Eret, from the woman. Those days were shrouded in fear.

“I’m assuming this has to do with who you’re trying to track.” Her eyes are calm when she says, “One last person.”

“More red in my ledger.” He agrees. “I’m starting to think it’ll never wash out.”

“It wasn’t your fault.” Kristin says, firmly. “You were a child, you’re still a child. A starving man will eat anything if it means the hunger will stop.”

“But I should’ve fought back-“

“You did,” she interrupts. “You still are. Moments of weakness aren’t uncommon and aren’t bad. You’re a child, Tommy. You’ve been taught to obey. It’s not your fault that you do.”

He thinks he’s crying.

He really wishes he wasn’t.

He doesn’t think he’s ever cried as much as he has in these last few days. Weakness isn’t acceptable in the Room. Emotions aren’t useful or encouraged.

He shoves his face into his knees. He hears shuffling and then a hand drops to his shoulder, guiding him into Kristin’s side, her arm wrapping around his shoulders.

“I’m so proud of you,” she says, quietly. “You’ve been fighting for so long, you’ve forgotten that you can just live. You don’t have to do this alone, Tommy.”

“I know,” he mumbles, even if it tastes like a lie.

In the Room, he could only ever rely on himself, trust himself.

But his brothers have been there for him from the start. They haven’t left him yet.

“As a God, you can soul-track,” Kristin starts and he perks up a little. “It’s difficult. Especially when you’re young. But if she’s your grandmother, you share blood. Her soul will

look familiar. When you start searching, it'll be a tugging sensation. Almost like playing hot or cold."

"That's how you always know where Phil is," Tommy breathes, the puzzle pieces snapping into place. "You made him a reaper so his soul is familiar."

She nods. "I wish I had time to teach you," she says. "But I learnt by trial and error. You'll have to do the same. Being a God is confusing but you'll work it out."

Tommy rolls his eyes. "Can't wait."

"Trust your gut," she says, gently jabbing him in the ribs. "If you can't find her like that, ask Dream's friend, Callahan. I've heard he can locate anyone." Kristin says. When Tommy pulls back to stare at her incredulously, she laughs again. "What? I pay attention."

"You're really fucking cool," he says, in awe. She laughs harder.

Tommy smiles at her, basking in the blue skies and sunshine of his limbo.

He has a plan now.

Let it be said, Phil believes himself to be a nice guy. He looks after his children, he's quick to apologise when he's made a mistake and he's been shy when it comes to showing his affection for the people he loves.

Phil is nice. He respects people and he enjoys company.

He's an immortal: interacting with newness gives him a sense of belonging.

The Angel of Death wasn't nice. Odin isn't nice.

He's still respectful but only when that respect has been earned and given back. He has no time for niceties with people who, given the chance, would be quick to kill him for the infamy of it.

Which is why it's satisfying to be sat in front of a group of individuals high up in the criminal food chain and watch as they refuse to make eye contact and flinch when his attention is directed at them.

Tommy has been sleeping for three days. The women and girls rescued from Tartu are either working with deprogrammers or have been returned home to their families. There has been no news of Madame B., or Niko Constantin, who disappeared the minute Phil showed up at that park.

Tommy may have made a case for not instantly murdering him the second he saw him, but Phil is glad he doesn't have to pretend to play nice. Sure, he understands the man's situation - he's like the older agents, moulded into a weapon and tampered with fear and blood and rage - but he still targeted his sons.

Phil is an immortal. He's allowed to hold a grudge.

But the lack of news is making him antsy and with Tommy out of commission and the other agents refusing to abandon him, it's Phil's opportunity to involve himself.

"So," he speaks finally, smirking at the way they all flinch. "Anyone?"

Heads drop and eyes dart away. Feet shift and throats swallow. No one says anything.

The bird at his shoulder tilts its head, wings ruffling. Some people wince. Phil sometimes forget that people have bird phobias.

"No?" He says. "Loki-"

"Um, Odin, sir?" A young man with big eyes and fidgeting hands steps forward, ignoring the hisses from the people surrounding him. He's an advisor of a small gang. "I think I speak for everyone when I say we don't understand what you're asking of us."

He's bold. Brave to approach. Phil likes him. Might consider offering him a job.

"I asked all of you, the gangs and crime rings of America, to find Madame Bohdana, a woman who works for Department X of Russia Intelligence. I even promised a handsome sum for anyone who brought her to me yet no one has. Which suggests she's not in America." The ex-agents believed as much. Phil guesses he's going to have to turn his sights abroad. "So now I'm telling you I want anyone from Department X. Scientists, agents, handlers. I don't give a shit, I want them."

"Why?" Someone else calls from the back.

"From what I've heard they're sneaky bastards." Another pipes up.

"That's Cold War propaganda, though. Not all Russians are sneaky bastards." Someone responds.

"And not everyone needs to have an opinion, dickhead."

Phil sighs. The room instantly falls silent. Wilbur's lips spread into a sharp grin.

"Why? Well, that's easy. The Department fucked with us." Wilbur says and Phil could laugh at the collective shiver at his voice, the wincing of the organisation that inadvertently have declared war on the Syndicate. "And I'm sure you all know what happens when someone fucks with us. We repay that kindness by tenfold."

Phil stands, surveys the group before him. "Some people have forgotten who I am. I intend to fix that mistake. Your choice is easy: bring me the heads of an organisation that have wronged me, or give me your own."

Phil doesn't like to threaten them. A few of the kingpins here, he's known for a long time. He's known their fathers and grandfathers, their mothers and grandmothers.

But he's more than just angry at people thinking because he's gone quiet, he's gone soft.

Phil is only soft for a few people. Soft people in this business, in his business, don't live for very wrong.

They've taken his kindness for weakness. He will no longer stand for it. Either he gets what he wants, or he gets a bloodbath. Maybe then, his anger at Tommy still resting in his hospital bed, and his sons' scars, and his younger sons admission of murdering people, will dissipate.

"Am I clear?" He calls and multiple voices chime in affirmatives.

Phil can't leave his sons when they need him but that doesn't mean he can't be busy.

These people will ease some of his burden by taking out the underlings of the Department.

Hopefully he can find Madame B. before she tries anything else.

When Tommy wakes up, he's warm. There's an even beep of the heart monitor beside him and the lights are on but not bright. The hospital bed he finds himself in is covered in soft blankets.

In front of him, passed out in armchairs, are Ranboo and Tubbo. Tommy smiles at that, at their relaxed expressions. Next to his bed, a ring sits on his side table.

He reaches for it, places the familiar comforting weight on his thumb, and then he slowly sits up and gets to work.

His body aches but he doesn't feel raw anymore. He checks himself, finds bandages that he knows covers already healed wounds. He rolls his shoulders, wings begging to be released.

Tommy ignores all of this.

Kristin said to trust his gut. And Tommy is good at trusting his instincts. He remembers when he accepted his Godhood, the feeling of lava in his veins, the bright gold burning through him.

He sits on his bed and focuses on the heat inside of him, pulling at it, allowing it to flood his veins and consume.

At the start, it's difficult. It's like holding a live wire, painful and sharp. But as he continues to hold, refusing to let something as simple as pain stop him, the sharp tingle spreads through his body.

When he opens his eyes - no blue left, just deep and endless liquid gold - everything flicks out of focus before returning with a different light. The boys in front of him have the gold woven through their light sources, their souls.

Tommy looks past them and out, searching.

Kristin said he would feel a tugging sensation.

And looking past the other strange souls - the reapers, the other agents, Jack's revenant soul, even a familiar looking soul of a younger brother - he feels it, pulling him away from America.

He wonders if he can teleport. He assumes so considering the woman was able to randomly appear in places. Then again, he doesn't need to, does he?

Tommy climbs out of the bed, making sure to flick the switches off so the machines don't start blaring. He removes the IV from his arm and leaves.

He's in the Syndicate's base and Tommy has spent enough time scouting out the place to avoid detection. He ends up in Wilbur's room and rifles through his wardrobe for one of his get-away bags he's stored here.

He changes in the bathroom. Uses the toilet, brushes his teeth, drinks some water to wash out his throat, brushes his hair.

Not that he feels like he needs it. In this form, with gold running through him, he has no desire for food or water. There's no ache to his limbs, no exhaustion clouding his vision. No pain from aches and hidden scars.

He feels unbreakable.

He feels like he's made of pure marble.

Once he's dressed and presentable, he sneaks out through the back door, through the tunnels and out to the waterfall.

Tommy inhales, holds it, exhales it.

Part of him is worried. Eryn's wings. Are they damaged? Did the Doctor get to them?

Before he can panic too much, he rolls his shoulders and feels his wings curl out. There is a pain when they first hit the air but when he spreads them, his form must heal than what he's used to. He grins at the way this form makes them look like they're engulfed in flames.

He is quick to preen and fix a few feathers, making sure they're in place and then he shakes them out. They feel healthy.

With that, he pushes himself up, wings flapping, and follows the pulling sensation.

"I have a feeling," Sapnap whines. Dream rolls his eyes from where his head is resting atop George's, arms curled around his shoulders. He can feel George huff. "I do! He's going to wake up today."

"You're not a psychic, Sap." George says.

“I know our little brother.” Sapnap replies, shortly. “I bet we’ll get there and he’ll be talking to Ranboo and Tubbo.”

Dream shifts, lifting his head and removing his arm so that they can walk without him clinging to George like a limpet. Not that George seems to mind. He would’ve had an elbow to the ribs if he did.

“You really want to go?” He asks and Sapnap nods, rocking back on his heels. “Fine.”

Dream keeps an arm locked around George’s shoulder - he won’t admit that some nights all he dreams about is losing him - and follows after an excitable Sapnap. Not that he can judge him. He misses speaking to Tommy, misses his attitude.

They turn the corner to the medical ward, approach Tommy’s room and open the door.

They all freeze.

Tubbo and Ranboo are curled into the armchairs they occupy, asleep. But the hospital bed Tommy is supposed to be sleeping in is empty, along with his ring.

Tommy is not in the room.

“Fuck.” Dream mutters.

It takes a surprisingly short amount of time to find where he needs to go. Like this, his wings don’t tire and he’s able to push himself faster for longer.

Soaring about the clouds, he circles Volgograd and nearly laughs at the irony. Of course she’s here.

This is where he told Phil he was from, the first time he asked. This is where all of the Red Room agents list as the hospital they were born in.

Tommy finds the apartment block he’s pulled to and drops. He lands on his feet, crouching to absorb the fall. His wings curl back into his back and he debates if he wants to hide.

He decides not to. Even if his face is caught on CCTV, to look into it, would be admitting that they know where he’s from.

And the Red Room is a well-known fairytale in Russia. Everyone knows it exists but no one wants to be the one to say it.

Tommy picks the lock on the rooftop door and then steps in. He climbs down the stairs, following the pulsing light.

He ends up on the third floor, approaching the fourth door. He once again picks the lock, and steps in.

Madame B. didn't survive this long without being cautious and so Tommy is careful to be silent and still when he enters, scanning everything in case she's got traps in her apartment.

Surprisingly enough, her home is quaint. The walls are painted a smooth cream and she has photos of different tourist destinations: the Eiffel Tower, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Big Ben. There aren't any photos of her or any family members.

The home may be quaint but it is cold.

Tommy follows the light until he notices that it's around the corner. He blinks at it and then lets the Godliness rush out of him.

He wants to do this as himself.

Just Tommy.

He steps around the corner and finds her pottering about in the kitchen, boiling the kettle. He darts forward, for the knife rack, and grabs a sharp knife.

"Hello, Grandma." He says in Russian and she freezes.

"Theseus," she greets, turning to face him, icy blue eyes wide. "To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"I wanted to end this." He says, calmly. "The woman always said I was created to destroy the world, to kill a God. I did one of those things. Guess I'm here to do the other."

"Killing me won't destroy the world."

"No, but it will destroy the world you've carefully created." He shrugs. "I think it's fitting to die by your own blood."

Tommy has forgotten who he is.

He is Theseus.

He is the Huntsman Spider.

They made him, moulded him, into this.

He was created for this purpose.

And he intends to follow it through.

"I used to want to know why," Tommy finds himself saying. "Why us? Why the program? Why kill children to create soldiers?"

"Well--"

"I don't care." Tommy interrupts. "I don't. Not anymore. It doesn't matter why or how or who. At the end of the day, you're a monster. You always will be. You're nothing. And I, like

the rest of us, survived. Most of us didn't and that? That fucking hurts but we lived, and we didn't break. And I think that's the biggest fuck you possible."

Tommy steps closer. The knife in his hand is a familiar weight. He told Phil no more but this, he thinks, is divine punishment.

"You'll die a nobody and I'll live and make a better future for myself, for the others."

Tommy doesn't wait for a response.

He's not lying when he says he no longer cares.

He lunges, slicing Madame B., Bohdana, his grandmother's throat, in her own kitchen as the kettle whistles in the background.

She crumbles to the ground. Tommy watches her fall. Blood gushes from the wound, staining her shirt red, staining the tiled floor red, staining her hands red. Everything is red.

He steps over her body, takes the kettle off the stove, turns it all off. He places the bloodied knife back in the rack.

He looks at her and pulls at that heat again, sees the way her soul is turning white. He grabs it and feels the way he brands it.

"For you, Kristin." He whispers, feels the way the soul shakes in his hands, feels a sudden chill as a skeletal hand grabs the soul from him.

"Thank you, Tommy," Kristin's voice whispers back.

He steps back and forces himself to walk out of the apartment, flicking the lights off and shutting the door behind him.

Tommy stands on the roof of that apartment block for a long moment. He soaks in the dying light of the sun, the chill in the air.

She is not a woman that will be missed.

He is someone that will be missed.

He realises that. Understands that people in his life care about him. He has a family. A good one.

With golden eyes and wings of flame, he takes to the air and returns home.

Chapter End Notes

Tommy really said: ya know what? I'm fixing this issue myself :)

Chapter 33

Chapter Notes

And we're back!

TW// mention of murder, past child abuse, past brainwashing, brief mention of vivisection, past injuries, scars, mention of past torture, weaponry, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream isn't panicking.

He's not. He's calm. So calm. So calm and composed and not panicking.

"Tommy got through to Constantin, right?" Sapnap murmurs and despite his even tone, his eyes are wide and apprehensive. "He wouldn't- I mean, he's the only one capable of slipping by--"

"Tommy left," Tubbo interrupts, pulling up the CCTV on his monitors in his Cave. They'd woken the boys up the minute they were sure Tommy was actually gone and not hiding in the vents. They also called Phil.

Dream leans in to see Tommy walk through the facility calmly. He doesn't look unwell at all.

"He's going to give me grey hairs." George breathes and Dream laughs, running a hand across his face. He looks to Tubbo.

"Brothers can ground other brothers, right? That's like, a healthy and normal thing to do in this situation."

Tubbo's lips twitch. "You're going to tell Tommy - avian Tommy, assassin Tommy - that you're grounding him?"

"If Niki tells him, he'll listen." George says, looking contemplative. "Or we set Wilbur on him. I'm sure he'd sit on him to stop him."

Tubbo grins. "Wilbur will puppy-dog eye him into submission. Techno would sit on him."

"But how do we find where he is?" Dream asks and Tubbo just laughs.

Without explanation, he pulls out his phone and starts messaging someone. His phone pings in response and Tubbo snorts.

Dream shares a look with George and Sapnap. Tubbo definitely has Huntsman blood in him.

Dream is about to ask who when there are footsteps behind them. All three tense before relaxing after recognising the familiar pattern. Tubbo blinks at them, turning in his chair before grinning.

“Hey, Phil.”

“Tommy’s gone?” The man sighs. Dream can see the way he’s trying to hide his own anxiety in the way his shoulders are tense but his eyes are calm. “Where’s Ranboo?”

“Finding Tech and Wil.” Tubbo replies. “Tommy walked out so he’s healed enough for that.”

Phil sighs again, steps closer to drop a hand onto Tubbo’s hair, careful to not crush his antennae. “You kids make me feel old.”

“You say that like you’re not already old.” Tubbo says and laughs when Phil ruffles his hair.

“I swear... Have you run his face through-“

“Yes. Nothing yet.”

Phil pats Tubbo’s head. “You all give me so many headaches.”

Wilbur pauses from where he’s trying to slash Techno with a knife when Ranboo comes crashing into the training room.

“Ranboo?” Techno questions, straightening, red eyes hardening. “Is everything okay?”

“Tommy’s gone.” Ranboo says, quietly, desperately.

Wilbur groans. “For fucks sake!”

Tommy stumbles into the Syndicate’s base, makes his way through the corridors on light feet and ends up collapsing on Wilbur’s bed. It’s warm but not what his avian brain is after. Standing, he grabs the necessary supplies and then heads to a spot he scouted earlier - it’s probably designed to be storage space - which is high up and small enough to be cosy.

He shuffles himself around, arranging the pillows, blankets and duvet into something his inner avian preens at and then curls up tight, wings pressed to his back.

He needs to have a deep, preening session, his mind comments idly. They’re a little messed up from the flight - Tommy hasn’t flown that fast ever - and his back aches from healing and then using his wings.

He's comfortable, though. Warm. Content. He's safe here. Madame is dead and most of the others are too.

General Dreykov may be out there but he doubts he will be for long.

So Tommy tucks his face into a pillow and lets himself drift off.

Getting a text from Tubbo suggesting that Tommy is missing has Purpled walking towards the Syndicate's base with a purpose.

"No offence," Punz says and Purpled knows he's about to say something offensive. "But Tommy is a literal assassin. I know you can take care of yourself but I don't like your odds of beating him up for running away."

Purpled rolls his eyes, steps around a warehouse. "I'm not going to beat him up."

"Are you sure? You look like you're going to beat him up."

"Punz?" Purpled flashes him a toothy smile. "Shut up."

The Egg, as they've dubbed it, has changed Punz. Purpled's big brother is quieter now, more withdrawn. It took a long time for him to stop apologising for what he did.

Purpled stayed with him through it all. They're brothers. Punz never abandoned him despite what their parents put them through and so Purpled wasn't going to walk away just because it got hard. They've weathered worse.

They approach the Syndicate's warehouse and start the task of passing through guards and reinforced doors. People look, seeming surprised that they're here, but no one stops them.

Once they hit the lobby, Purpled grins down at Anchor the shark, swimming beneath their feet.

"Hey, buddy." He greets. "You mind telling me where Tommy is?"

"I didn't know you could speak shark--"

"I'm going to hit you." Purpled interrupts Punz and glares when he laughs in response. "Let's go."

Punz pauses at that before hurrying after him. "Wait, you know where he is?" He narrows his eyes. "Can you actually speak shark?"

"No, idiot." Purpled sighs. "I just know Tommy."

Purpled walks around the base, heading straight to where their safe rooms are (yes, he's previously scouted the place, because Purpled is an opportunist and it's the Syndicate's base). Walking through, he beelines towards the bedrooms and then starts looking up.

Punz follows at a more leisurely pace but Purpled can see the way he's casing the place, watching his back, ready to intervene. It warms Purpled, even if he's lived with this his entire life. Hell, Purpled remembers the same looks when Punz used to walk him to school.

(Purpled has never been bullied. He likes to think it's because he's a pretty intimidating guy but he knows it's his scary big brother, always there, with that cocky grin and raised eyebrow as if daring someone to mess with his little brother.)

It doesn't take him long to find Tommy.

He's wedged himself up high, hidden beneath a duvet and at least two blankets.

Purpled lifts himself up and immediately prods the boy. Who knows self-preservation when he has to trust in friendship?

It speaks to how comfortable and safe Tommy feels for Purpled to be able to get as close as he is and actually touch the boy.

But Tommy is still Tommy. Still an assassin. Still a Huntsman Spider.

Purpled goes to poke him again.

A hand grabs him by the wrist. Surprisingly strong.

Purpled looks up and meets sleepy, blue eyes. "Hey, Tommy." He speaks, stoically as if his hand isn't being restrained by a highly skilled child soldier. He's loud enough for Tommy to hear him clearly but soft enough to not get him to startle. He would like to keep all of his fingers. "You've got everyone panicking."

Tommy blinks at him. "What the fuck are you talking about?"

"Give me my hand back and we'll talk."

Tommy blinks again and then releases him. Purpled drops back to the ground and Tommy crawls out, looking a little dazed, wings fluttering as his feet touch the ground. His skin has a strange glow to it and Purpled, despite not having many puzzle pieces, can start to put a picture together.

"You disappeared." Purpled tells him when it's clear he won't be the first to speak.

"I had something to take care of."

Punz steps up beside Purpled. "Something so important you left before getting checked over or telling anyone so they wouldn't freak out?"

Tommy nods, rubs his eyes. "Now there's only one person left who needs to die."

Punz stares at him. Purpled snorts. "Yeah?" He says. "Who'd you kill this time?"

“My grandma.” Tommy says, casually, as if Purpled is aware of this information. Tommy smiles slightly, a little uptick of his lips, his feathers ruffle softly. “She was a bitch.”

“Uh huh,” Punz mumbles, looking like he’s contemplating something. When he turns to Purpled, he nearly laughs at the expression, an expression that clearly says he’s glad he only had to raise and look after Purpled and not the mess of a child soldier before them.

“Your grandma is dead-“

“The wicked bitch is dead, yes.” Tommy interrupts, idly. His feathers ruffle again and even from where Purpled stands, he can see a few are out of place.

He wants to touch, help straighten them out. But he’s spent enough time around Phil, through Quackity, to know touching an avian’s wings without permission won’t end well.

And Tommy is an assassin who’s still recovering from years of abuse.

Purpled wants to keep his hands.

“-so can we go and see your panicking brothers and dad?” Purpled finishes.

“You want to rub it in that you knew where he was,” Punz mutters.

“That too!” Purpled grins, slowly reaches out, telegraphing his movements considering he has no idea what headspace Tommy is in, before lightly punching him in the stomach. Tommy smiles back - a little stronger, a little more awake - and punches his shoulder back. Just as lightly.

A deadly assassin who knows how to pull his punches. Purpled has a suspicion he knows where Tommy learnt that from.

“C’mon,” he says and Tommy follows easily enough. He still looks a little tired but Purpled knows if need be, Tommy could have them all on the ground in seconds.

Hell, he’s a God now.

But it tells Purpled how Tommy really feels about him. He’s being openly vulnerable and there’s no hesitation about it. Tommy trusts them, even if Purpled doubts he’d ever admit that out loud.

It warms him.

So Purpled walks from the Syndicate’s living area and towards Tubbo’s Cave. He takes out his phone to tell him to make sure they’re all there. Then he focuses back on navigating twisting corridors and ignoring the instinctual fear of having a killer at his back.

Ever since Purpled met Tommy - young but with eyes older than his face, sharp-tongued but flinched at the idea of hurting someone, watching everyone, everything, all of the time - there has been an energy about him, an aura that makes him want to step away, to always keep him in his field of vision. It’s a healthy dose of intrigue and fear. It’s why Quackity had grinned

when they met: a snake sensing something like it. It's why, at the start, Punz was always there by Purpled's side whenever Tommy showed up for work.

It's prey sensing a predator.

Tommy hides it well. He's loud and boisterous. He's lanky and skinny and doesn't look like a threat at all.

When Purpled met Technoblade, he loudly gulped, because that man is built like a tank, wearing his scars like a medal, red eyes the colour of freshly spilt blood. Techno is scary because he looks terrifying.

But Tommy is like Wilbur. In fact, all of the Red Room agents are. They all look normal. There's nothing overly noticeable about them.

Dream's laugh hides his scar and Corpse rarely goes out enough to show his own. Niki is a baker and when Purpled found out she was a Black Widow, he's pretty sure he thought he would faint in surprise.

But then again, it's that aura about them.

He thinks that the others don't notice. The Syndicate are terrifying as it is so of course they wouldn't sense anything off. Quackity is drawn to dangerous people and dangerous situations, it's practically an addiction.

Purpled is normal. He grew up under the roof of a monster and a mother who didn't care. He fought to survive and he bears those scars openly. He's healing, growing, accepting himself.

But at the end of the day, he's normal and Tommy isn't. He likes to think he gives off the same surrounding darkness that hangs around the agents but he knows he doesn't.

Being around them is like being stared at by the big cats at the zoo.

They all can tone it down but when they're looking at him, intensely, staring as if straight into his soul, it makes him shiver with primal fear and apprehension.

Purpled shakes away the thoughts as he notices the many people standing in Tubbo's Cave.

"Tubbo!" He shouts, drawing all of their attention, ignoring the spike of his heart rate when three people turn, and smiles.

"Purpled?" Phil asks. "Why are you-"

Purpled steps aside, points to Tommy. "Tubbo texted me about you losing Tommy so I found him."

"How?" Wilbur asks, eyebrows raised.

"Tommy loves high places." Purpled replies nonchalantly. "And warm things. Bird shit, right, Phil?"

Phil blinks. "That doesn't explain how you found him."

Purpled just keeps smiling. Phil narrows his eyes. Techno rolls his eyes as Tommy walks past Punz up to Dream and drops his forehead onto his shoulder before stepping back.

"I'm here and alive." He states.

"Where'd you go?" Sapnap asks.

"Had shit to do and a bitch to kill." Tommy replies. Nods to himself. His wings stretch and then settle. "Did that. Came back. Went to sleep. Can I go now?"

"You gave everyone a heart attack when you left, boss man." Tubbo says and Tommy frowns.

"I'm not going anywhere again. I don't have to."

"You're a mess," George says and Techno snorts. Tommy's frown deepens.

"Don't be a bitch boy George. That's mean. I'm tired so being mean to me is like, illegal. Don't do illegal shit."

"Tommy-" Wilbur opens his mouth but Tommy shakes his head.

"If you say some shit about me being a murderer and murder being illegal, I will stab you. I'm in a stabbing mood."

"You're always in a stabbing mood," Ranboo tells him, leaning against Tubbo's desk.

Tommy glares at him. "That's besides the point. Now I'm going back to sleep and if any of you try to stop me, I will fly myself into the sun. Got it? Good. Now fuck off. Kindly."

Tommy turns and immediately is followed by his brothers.

Phil smiles at Purpled and Punz. "Thank you for finding him."

"It's cool," Purpled says but Punz taps his chin.

"Finding a missing person can get you a nice reward, right? I'd be happy with five hundred-"

Techno snorts at him. "You'll get five hundred dollars if you leave now and I don't catch you."

"Damn, Tech. I think the bitch boy syndrome is catching." Wilbur says, laughing when Techno lunges for him. Ranboo and Tubbo smile at the display. Phil sighs.

"Boys," he mumbles.

Punz knocks Purpled's shoulder lightly. Brothers. Whether by blood or by choice. The urge to defend them with your life but then strangle them yourself is a strong one.

And Purpled knows that Tommy has a good family here.

He doesn't know what's happened. He doesn't know why Tommy is injured or why he ran away to murder someone or why he looks tired but he knows he'll be okay.

Purpled and Tommy are both survivors.

They both have good brothers.

Purpled leaves the Syndicate's base with a smile, fighting off Punz as he tries to ruffle his hair.

The next time Tommy wakes, he's surrounded by his brothers. George sits below his nest watching as Sapnap and Dream throw and catch a knife between them. They've yet to blindfold each other so Tommy hasn't been asleep for long.

They walk him back to Ponk, who looks at him with a smile he's trying to hide. They offer to stay but Tommy has never felt threatened by Ponk as he did with the doctors in the Room.

"Sorry, Doc." Tommy mutters and Ponk rolls his eyes.

"Next time you plan to run off after being vivisected, can you drop in first so I know you're not immediately going to collapse?" Ponk says but he's smiling now and Tommy can't help but return it.

Ponk checks him over, reassuring him that everything seems to be in working order.

It's almost as if he was never on death's door.

Almost as if his body has healed every injury it gained.

If Tommy focuses, he can feel the difference under his skin, the itch of power begging to be released. The more he uses it, the more being human seems strange.

Feeling no hunger, no thirst, no exhaustion had been nice. But Tommy didn't ask to be a God. Being this, being Tommy is enough.

He knows one day, when his powers fully settle into his bones, he'll be like Kristin, like the woman. Something otherworldly, something slightly off.

But for now he's just Tommy.

"Keep moving and keep eating but don't force yourself if you're starting to feel nauseous." Ponk tells him. "Anything feels wrong, come and see me. Even if it's stupid."

"Thanks, Ponk." He replies and Ponk grins at him.

"A year ago, when I was picking bullets out of the Syndicate, I never expected it to end up here."

Tommy raises his eyebrows. “You thought they’d try and kill me?”

“I’ve been the personal medic of them for a while.” Ponk says, runs a hand through curly, white hair. “No one shoots at the Syndicate and walks away. Then again, you’re not just anyone, are you?”

Tommy laughs. No, he thinks. He’s not.

He stands, prepares to leave and then pauses. “Ponk?” He asks and nearly continues walking but Ponk turns, face calm, expression open.

“Yeah?”

Tommy should leave.

In the Red Room, doctors weren’t good. They were cruel and harsh and only kind when he didn’t fight back. Anaesthetic was a privilege in the Room.

He shakes the thought away.

He’s not in the Room anymore.

“I feel... weird.” He says and the winces, not being able to meet Ponk’s eyes. “I- I feel clingy.”

Now Madame is dead and he’s more awake, not being able to see Phil and his brothers is making him twitchy. There’s a strange longing in his gut, a need to be close, to keep them in his sights.

Ponk doesn’t laugh at him. Instead, he nods. “That makes sense,” he says slowly, as if trying not to spook Tommy. “You’ve gone through an extremely traumatic event. Very few people can undergo torture and get back up with a smile.”

“We were trained to do that though.” Tommy says, bluntly.

Ponk’s eyes widen. “They... they trained you to withstand torture? At your age?”

Tommy nods, still not meeting his eyes. “I think our first lesson was maybe when I was ten. Or twelve. Then we’d have a couple of them every year, each lesson getting worse. If you broke, you died.”

Breaking out of his torture lesson was what made George start to pay attention to him. It is one of his proudest moments.

“What happened after?” Ponk asks, voice strained. “Please tell me they checked your wounds and gave you a day of rest. At least some comfort item.”

Tommy finally meets his eyes, staring at him blankly. Sure, his memories aren’t to be believed most of the time but he thinks he would’ve remembered a day off.

“They healed the worst of the wounds,” he agrees. “If you couldn’t fight, you were a hindrance but we had to learn to control our pain.”

Five year old Theseus getting hit by a cane and crying at the sting, wincing at the sight of blood.

Ten year old Theseus breaking his leg and having to walk on it without even a flinch.

Fifteen year old Theseus, gunshot wound and concussion, fighting men twice his size with a bloody grin, laughing as a knife goes through his hand.

“Tommy,” Ponk starts. Pauses. Thinks whatever he’s about to say. Opens his mouth and continues, “Tommy. When they cut into you-“

“No, I didn’t have any anaesthesia or pain killers.” Tommy finishes because he knows what he’s going to be asked.

Ponk shakes his head, looking close to tears. “Didn’t it hurt?”

Tommy blinks at him. “Surgery isn’t fun, man. Of course it hurt.” He knows what Ponk means though. Most people would be screaming under the pain, going into shock, passing out. “I got over it.”

Ponk stares at him. It’s not a pitying stare but it is full of pain and concern.

Tommy doesn’t know how to explain that he is made of marble. He does not break. He does not shatter. He only grows stronger. He simply keeps fighting.

In the Room, weakness is death.

Tommy refused to die.

“Tommy, I-“ Ponk cuts himself off, runs his hand across his face. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry you had to deal with that, live through that. But as for your earlier comment: feeling clingy is normal. After something like that, your body and brain needs comfort, safety, and stability. You’re seeking out people that you know can protect you. Plus, you’re an avian. Your instincts are pushing you towards Phil.”

Tommy nods. That makes sense, even if he’s not used to needing people.

Friendship leads to complacency and complacency leads to death.

Spiders are solitary creatures. They’re not pack animals. They survive and hunt and kill independently.

But Tommy is tired of doing this all by himself.

“Thank you,” he says to Ponk again and leaves, falling into Sapnap, who’s lurking outside the door.

“All good?” He asks and Tommy sighs when a warm hand pats his head.

“I have to take it easy but yeah. I’m fucking great.”

“Let’s go get some food into you then.” George suggests and Dream nudges Tommy away from Sapnap and forward.

If Tommy walks closely to his brothers, none of them mention it.

Sitting in one of the Syndicate’s meeting rooms, Phil can feel himself going grey. The silence in the room is extremely telling.

“Toms.” Wilbur is the only brave enough one to ask. “What do you mean you killed your grandma?”

“I just told you, big dubs!” Tommy snaps around a mouthful of stew. He’s looking less pale and less glowy. The gold is ebbing from his skin and is being replaced by a healthy pink. “I spoke to Kristin. Woke up. Tracked my Grandma to Volgograd, which is too ironic and too funny. Slit her throat. Came back. Fell asleep and here we are.”

“And your grandma is Madame B?” Techno asks and Tommy nods.

“So now only Dreykov is left and pretty much all the high ranking officials of the Department are dead. Obviously there are more agents but I’ve heard from Georgie that you’re dealing with that, Phil.”

“People may fear the Department but they fear me more.” Phil agrees and he gets a couple of snorts and few chuckles in response.

Since he told his people to hunt down the Department, he’s been inundated with emails showing him the evidence. He’s spoken to a few gangs he knows in Europe over the phone and got the word out but he hasn’t been there personally to oversee their work.

He’ll go when he knows Tommy is in a better state.

He knows from experience killing them all won’t kill the idea. The Red Room was extremely successful and he doubts the Russians are the only ones to use children as assassins.

One step at a time, he reminds himself.

He’s immortal, after all. He’s got time to spare.

“Do you have a plan for Dreykov?” Niki asks Tommy and he pauses mid-bite.

“Stampy and Constantin are both free, I wouldn’t be fucking shocked if they took him out.”

“But…” Sean says, drawing the word out.

“Puffy was going to those UN conferences, right? About human trafficking and shit?” Dream and Puffy both nod. Sam, who has been silent and still this entire time, also nods. Tommy grins. “Then I think it’s time the Syndicate paired with the Heroes show up, with all of us.”

The room falls quiet.

Corpse chuckles, darkly. “You’re going to draw him out?”

“Well, Corpse,” Tommy says, snootily. “I was taught that Black Widows construct a beautiful silken web to lure their prey in while Huntsman Spiders wait for the opportune moment before chasing their prey. I have a feeling this particular fly is going to need a big fucking display to get him out in the open.”

“Also,” Niki starts, slowly, watching the other agents closely, “we can finally explain our stories.”

“They won’t care,” Minx snaps but Tina shakes her head.

“They will if we’re loud about it.”

“A untied front is harder to beat,” Brooke adds. Rae nods at her.

“And even if they don’t listen,” Leslie speaks, head resting on her fist, “we’re showing the others we won’t be silenced.”

“You might make yourselves targets,” Puffy warns and Sean laughs.

“We’re already targets.”

“Their current fear is in the ghost stories told about us,” Corpse drawls. “I think it’s time to show them how scared they should be.”

Phil sighs. Multiple sets of eyes flick over to him. Quackity looks close to laughter. Puffy’s eyes are wide. Grian shares the same look with her but slightly more panicked; Phil wonders if Scott will be hearing about this. Drista is grinning and Ponk is smirking and Sam has a tiny smile on his lips. Grey, sitting beside Sean, also sighs but looks excited. Ethan and Mark share an eager look.

Karl looks oddly serene. Phil assumes that means no one is going to end up dead. Small mercies.

He looks over to his family, ignoring the bloodthirsty smiles spilling across the agents’ faces. Tubbo and Ranboo meet his eyes with pleading stares. He knows they’d follow Tommy anywhere at this point.

Brothers by something stronger than blood. Brothers by choice.

He turns to find Wilbur and Techno smiling at them. His sons, always happy to cause chaos and bloodshed.

“You know,” he says, calmly. “In my day, we didn’t have a peace-keeping organisation. We only had a war counsel.”

That’s all he needs for them to suddenly start spitting ideas at one another.

Phil let’s his own dark grin sit on his face. He never said he didn’t enjoy the chaos or bloodshed. In fact, he’s missed it.

It takes Ponk a week to give Tommy the all clear. Everyone is more than surprised at his quick recovery. Phil, less so. He pats his head, ruffles his hair, tells him, “In all my years of knowing my wife, I’ve never seen a scar on her.”

Freshly healed and feeling much, much better, Tommy stands on the doorstep of the orphanage. His brothers walk out of sight, close enough to watch but far away enough to give him space.

His hands are a little shaky. His tongue a little heavy in his mouth.

Tommy is nervous.

“Fuck,” he mumbles and then pushes it all down, like how the Room taught him, and steps in.

Very little has changed. The walls are still pastel colours. There’s shoes stacked by the door. Paintings and drawings decorate the available space.

And standing before him is a boy with messy blond hair and dark eyes.

“Theseus,” Shroud greets and Tommy stares at him, noting their similarities now he has all of the evidence presented to him.

The same blond hair. The same lanky frame. The fact that Shroud is like Dan with his cloning abilities. The determination they all share, a defining stubbornness and will in their bloodline.

Tommy looks at Shroud and knows that even if he didn’t get out, this boy has enough fire in him to.

“Shroud,” he says. “Where’s Hive?”

“Terrorising the birds.” Shroud says, nonchalantly. “Why?”

So defensive. So snappish. So much like Tommy it hurts.

He can see now why Dream saw him and knew he would live. Why Sapnap easily accepted him as his new brother. Why George waited for him to prove the fact he could live.

Shroud has fire in his eyes that burns, leaving the question of whether he’ll consume everyone around him or himself.

Tommy's mother's fire consumed her. Their father's saved him. Tommy's got him out of that hell-hole. Shroud's is simply burning.

"I found some shit out," Tommy says. He jerks his head to the outside, in eyesight of his brothers, away from the other children. "Let's chat."

Chapter End Notes

Golden Duo my beloved <3

Chapter 34

Chapter Notes

Hey guys!

TW// brief mention of suicidal ideation, past brainwashing, past child abuse, mention of manipulation and gaslighting, scars, mental health discussions, mention of murder, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy sits in the grass, trying and failing to hide his smile as flowers bloom around him. Shroud is a lot more hesitant, eyes snapping to where Dream, George and Sapnap stand by the trees.

“I nearly died,” Tommy says and Shroud’s head swivels to him, eyes wide. “I lived, obviously but they’re overprotective assholes.” That he wouldn’t change for the world.

Shroud relaxes somewhat at his explanation. He slowly sinks to the ground opposite Tommy, keeping the others in his vision.

“Is that what you wanted to talk about?” Shroud asks. “You dying?”

Tommy shakes his head. “Nah. I- Look, I’m going to sound like a fucking weirdo but hear me out, okay?” He waits for Shroud to nod and then asks, “Do you know how old you are?”

Shroud’s brow furrows before he replies, “They think I’m thirteen.”

Tommy hums. “You were close to graduating.”

Shroud snorts, looks down at the flowers spilling over the grass. “If I survived.”

“You don’t think you would’ve?” Tommy asks. He’d always been so sure that he would live, so determined to keep pushing and fighting.

Then again, Tommy grew up with three brothers who fought for him.

“I got this far,” Shroud says with a shrug. “But I don’t know if I would’ve been able to beat Dream.” He pauses, dark eyes meeting blue ones. “Or, I suppose, it would’ve been you.”

The irony once again isn’t lost on Tommy. He fought Dream to graduate, a brother in everything but blood. He would’ve ended up fighting Shroud, a boy he’s only recently

discovered to be his blood brother.

“I could spar with you if you want to,” Tommy says, quietly. “Find out which one of us is better. Even if I am the fucking best.”

Shroud snorts again, more tension leaving his shoulders.

“What’s my age got to do with us talking?” Shroud asks after a moment of silence.

“I found some shit out before I nearly died.” Tommy says, looking him over. “Shit that involves you.”

Shroud raises his eyebrows. “Yeah?”

Tommy takes a deep breath, decides to be as blunt as possible about it. “You’re my brother,” he rushes out. Shroud stills. Tommy can’t stop the words from spilling out, “Dan - our dad - he could clone himself, which you’ve seemed to inherit. We don’t have the same mum, mine died trying to get me out of the Room. So yeah we-“

“Shut up.” Shroud hisses.

Tommy shuts his mouth.

They’re silent for a long, long time. Shroud sits before Tommy, barely blinking, barely breathing. Tommy doesn’t try to push him to talk. He lets the moment simply exist.

He occasionally feels the enquiring stares from Dream, George and Sapnap. They stay away though. Even from where they stand, they can probably tell that Shroud needs a second to digest this.

“Is that why you nearly died?” Shroud asks, after a shaky inhale. “Because of our... dad?”

Tommy pauses. “My mum,” he starts, stops. Takes a breath. “My mum is the daughter of the woman who created the Red Room. Madame B. That’s why I nearly died. She wanted me to be the perfect Huntman, like the woman did.”

Shroud thinks this over. “You’re my big brother.”

Tommy nods. “Yeah.” He winces. “Sorry for just fucking dropping this on you but I felt like you needed to know. The Room loved its secrets so-“

“Everyone said we looked like brothers,” Shroud interrupts, looks up at him. “Do you think Michael is related to one of your... friends, then? They look similar.” The word friends sounds foreign on his tongue.

Tommy freezes at that. It would make sense. Tommy gravitated towards Shroud while Ranboo and Tubbo immediately latched onto Michael. He reasons Tubbo might be the likely option considering Ranboo and Niki were related.

Agents always seem to find each other.

“Fuck,” he mutters. “I think I need to suggest we get everyone DNA tested.”

Shroud snorts, plucks a flower from the grass. “That might be for the best.”

Tommy tilts his head. “You know,” he says. “I thought you’d be freaking out more about this. It’s not everyday you find someone related to you.”

Shroud shrugs, doesn’t meet his eyes. “The Room was messed up,” he replies. “Finding out about secret brothers isn’t the worst thing that could have come from it. Plus, you’re the Huntsman Spider. And if rumour is to be believed, a God. Being your brother is an upgrade, honestly.”

Tommy laughs at that. “What can I say, I am a badass.”

Voices from inside call for lunch. Shroud looks at him. “I don’t mind doing this again,” he says, a little awkwardly.

Tommy grins. “Cool.”

He leaves the orphanage feeling lighter.

(Phil is surprised by the request.

A week later, when the results come back, he’s hit with sudden understanding.

Michael is related Tubbo. They share the same father.)

(Tommy wonders what else the Room has stolen from them, wonders if there’s anything left they’ll have for themselves.)

In the end, it’s Grey that tells Sean what xe’s heard through the covert communication xe still listens to occasionally. Xe knows the Beast Labs didn’t care for xem, that xe was a means to an end, a good weapon turned good scientist. But there were people there that were like xem, forced to work. Befriending them felt like rebellion and Grey likes talking to them.

So when Ludwig contacts xem, Grey’s a little surprised. He was a regular at the Beast Labs considering his strange blood abilities. An odd desire to drink it paired with the ability to transform into the person whose blood he was drinking. But a year ago, he arrived half-dead and never left. No one came to collect him.

“They used me for target practice,” he had said with a shrug. “So I’m here now.”

Grey asked him, when the dust had settled and they were both free from the Labs, why he never contacted the other agents, told them he was alive.

“The Ludwig they know is dead,” he said, quietly. “I like being free and with my power, they’ll never find me.”

So Grey didn’t push. It wasn’t his place to.

But getting that information has him wishing Ludwig did come back, just so he can explain and not Grey.

“I need to speak to you,” Grey says when Sean appears at his shoulder, head resting on his shoulder.

“Ooo, scary.”

Grey talks. Lays out the facts. Let’s Sean process it. The silence is deafening.

“You trust whoever told you this?” Sean asks, oddly serious. Grey nods. Sean groans. “Fuck’s sake. Now I’m going to have to tell the others. Fuck.”

“That is why I told you.” Grey murmurs. “I’m not really good with… people.”

Sean laughs and Grey feels lighter. He’ll leave the talking to Sean.

Tommy doesn’t really know what he expected. It is the Room after all. Using people, children, as weapons has never stopped them before.

“None of you remember anything about what happened?” Corpse asks, intrigued.

They all shake their heads. Ranboo is as still and as silent as a statue. Niki’s eyes are wide and she’s gripping Jack’s hand so hard, her knuckles are white. Minx looks downright murderous. Wisps of energy coil around Rae’s fingers. There’s a thin layer of frost beneath Sykunno’s shoes.

“You remember what happened?” Sean asks Corpse, in the silence surrounding them.

“Grigor is good but I’m better.”

Sean’s lips twitch and he laughs. “Yeah, buddy, that’s right!” He pauses, runs a hand through green hair. “Is- Did they really see me as bloodthirsty?”

Corpse nods. “I was worried they’d try take you out but Tubbo got to us first.” Dark eyes meet Tubbo’s and Corpse smiles. Tommy coughs to hide his shock. “We owe our freedom to you.”

Tubbo flushes, antennae flicking around wildly, wings thrumming. “Oh- I- it’s cool, man!”

Tommy snorts and rolls his eyes when Tubbo glares at him in mock-offence. “Corpse isn’t lying, Tubs. You saved all of us.”

Tubbo's red blush darkens as he stutters out an indecipherable response.

Tommy turns to Ranboo, kicks him in the shin, hard enough to gain his attention but not enough to bruise. When he looks up, Tommy says, "You look sad. You know what I do when I'm sad?"

"What?" Ranboo mutters.

"I just don't. Don't be sad. Think a happy thought!" Tommy gives him a thumbs up. Ranboo stares at him. Tommy sighs and then says, "Talk."

"Why?" Ranboo murmurs, distant and lost.

"Because it's better if you talk," Tommy says. "And before you start being bitchy and say I don't talk: I have a therapist and! I was trained to compartmentalise. You, Boob-boy, were not. We learnt that shit a year after you fucked off. So talk. What're you thinking?"

Ranboo is quiet for a long time before he finally settles on, "I don't know what to think." Tommy waits him out. "I mean, I've killed multiple times now and I- I don't feel anything? Alexei deserved it and I don't remember anything about the person I killed when I was five and now... now I've killed more people. I don't remember anything. I feel strangely numb."

"Numb is what proceeds growth," Tommy says, remembering that from what his therapist told him.

"I know it feels worse, the not knowing, but that's sometimes the only good thing to come of it." George says, quietly. When he looks at Ranboo, his eyes are burning. "Ignorance is bliss when it comes to what we do."

"But I'm not like you--"

"Good." Brooke interrupts. "You shouldn't have to be."

"But none of you seem phased by this!" Ranboo raises his voice slightly and Leslie laughs a hollow laugh.

Tina replies, "Yeah, that's the trauma."

"All of us spent our childhoods not knowing what was reality from fiction. This is our normal now." Dream says with a shrug.

"Plus, we compartmentalise, like Tommy said," Sapnap adds. "Can't think your mistakes over when you can't remember them."

Ranboo stares at them. "How are any of you functioning?"

"We aren't," Rae says with a wide smile.

"The trauma," Sykunno repeats.

“My trauma made me funnier,” Minx says. “And hotter.”

“We’re all fucked up,” Corpse says, fingers fiddling with the drawstrings on his hoodie.

“That’s why therapy is good,” Tommy says. “And talking shit out. That way we can get our sides of the story and see if the shit we saw was real or not.”

“The numbness you’re feeling will leave eventually,” Dream says, reaching over to ruffle Ranboo’s hair. “And everything is going to crash around you. No one is expecting you to ride that storm alone, okay?”

“And don’t run away,” Sapnap hisses, glaring at Tommy, who ducks his head and then at George, who immediately slaps the back of Sapnap’s head and then lunges back to avoid a punch aimed his way.

“It sucks,” Tommy says to Ranboo. “And it hurts. And it’s all fucking bad. But like I’ve been told many times, it’s not your fault. You weren’t in control. You were forced to do that shit. Knowing that doesn’t really help but you need to know it, okay?”

“I still killed Alexei,” Ranboo whispers.

“I was going to kill Alexei,” Tubbo replies, nudging their knees together. “He was a bad person and was purposefully winding us all up. I killed Grigor to save you, remember? I did that with my own free will because he was hurting you.”

Ranboo swallows and then turns to drop his face into Tubbo’s hair. Tommy watches the display, heart hurting.

He’s done this to them. He’s pushed them to be people they never wanted to be.

Before he showed up, Ranboo never knew he was a recruit and Tubbo—

Well, Tubbo had nuclear codes but he wasn’t killing anyone. They both got to pretend to be normal.

“I’m sorry for-“

“Shut up!” Several voices chime and Tommy flinches.

“What?” He snaps.

“We wanted the Room gone as much as you did,” Niki says, eyes narrowed on him. “We all knew the risks and we still came.”

“But-“

“Tommy,” Ranboo says, face still buried in Tubbo’s hair but voice earnest. “We wanted to help you, too.”

“Where you go, we follow!” Tubbo grins.

“But everything changed when I came to L’Manberg-“

“Bossman, our dad is a literal crime boss.” Tubbo interrupts. “He is, in fact, the biggest crime boss in America and is known world wide for being scary as fuck.”

“L’Manberg wasn’t normal before you came,” Ranboo says, voice muffled. “It’s like, a hub of crime.”

Tommy glares at them. Tubbo snorts. “If we’re not allowed to blame ourselves, you’re not either.”

“Fuck you.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“Are we still going to the UN?” Niki asks in the quiet lull. “Because if we’re doing this, then we’re doing this as a team.”

Shared glances but no words spoken as they all turn to Tommy. He got out and started this. He proved they were all more than the weapons they were told they were.

“I’m tired of being tired,” he say, looking somewhere over Dream’s shoulder. “They’ve taken everything from us and we deserve more than that. We deserve the chance to be normal. I want the world to know that we’re out and we’re free and we’re not going to be fucked over anymore.”

“Everyone will know about us.” George says, quietly. “We’ll be criticised, seen only as murderers.”

“But then they’re less likely to employ child soldiers,” Leslie responds. “If we show up united and unafraid, we’ll be forcing them to listen and not repeat what happened to us.”

“I know it’ll be drawing unnecessary attention considering we work best in the shadows but at least then they’ll have something to truly fear.” Tommy says, firmly. “I don’t want anyone to live through what we did. If that means using their fear of us then fucking fine.”

More shared glances. The air grows tense before relaxing.

“The UN won’t know what hit them,” Jack shouts, nudging Niki with his shoulder, and Tommy laughs.

The Room may have controlled them, may have their hooks in deep, but they’re in this together. It’s about time they start removing it from their lives.

It’s not enough to escape their past.

They must overcome it.

Tommy, when his mind is clearer than it has been in days, finds who he needs and starts talking. They're in Phil's house, with Phil pouring out tea, while Wilbur sits atop the counter and Techno rests against the cupboards.

He tells them, for the first time, everything he remembers.

He tells them about killing someone at five. He tells them about his tattoo, his name, the obsession the woman had with him. He speaks of his blood parents, of Madame, of Hannah and Eryn, of his Handler.

He talks about graduation, about the pain of the woman's godliness rushing through his veins, planning his escape and running. He talks about existing outside of his prison but still being leashed.

He mentions his version of events of finding them, of leaving for the Room, of being a God, of returning home.

His mouth grows dry and he goes through three cups of tea when he finishes with recent events, about finding out that while under Madame's hold, the others were made to kill.

"I'm tired," he tells them. "But I want it to be over and it can never be over so long as there are people that still believe in it."

"Jesus, mate," Phil breathes, eyes wide.

"I've heard about you joking it was hell but that is worse than hell." Techno murmurs, hands shaking on the cup.

Wilbur doesn't say anything. He jumps down from the counter and opens his arms. Tommy immediately falls into them, gripping the back of his shirt, face buried in the crook of his neck.

"If I could, I would go back in time and burn that place to the ground before they could ever touch you." Wilbur breathes, furious and angry and protective. "You're a good kid, Tommy."

Tommy grips his tighter. "You saved me, you know?" He whispers, unsure if the others can hear him. By the low, wounded chirp and creaking of the table under Techno's hand, they did.

"What?" Wilbur murmurs into his hair. "You escaped by yourself-"

"I was so confused and scared when Quackity told me to steal your watch," Tommy interrupts. "I thought I was alone. I thought my brothers were dead or, if they weren't, I thought they hated me. I was so close to running and never stopping. To trying to find a way to end it all even with Eret's control."

"Toms," Wilbur breathes, hold becoming suffocating around him but Tommy finds himself relaxing more.

"You showed me that I didn't have to live like that," Tommy continues. "You showed me what a family really looks like. You gave me a reason to keep fighting. Even when I- when

you died, it broke me because you- you saved me and I-“

“I’m here, I’m here, it’s okay,” Wilbur hushes him, hand running up and down his back soothingly. “I’m alive and so are you.”

Tommy owes his life of freedom to Quackity, for taking him in, Wilbur, for showing him what life can be like, and Niki, for proving he’s not alone. Without Quackity telling him to steal Wilbur’s watch, Tommy probably wouldn’t be here. He’d be back with the Room, under their control.

“Thank you,” Tommy whispers into his chest. “Thank you for saving me.”

Wilbur squeezes him tighter, one arm around his shoulders, the other wrapped around his head, a hand petting his hair. “You’re my little brother,” Wilbur says. “I told you at the start. I’m possessive when it comes to my things, my people. You’re mine, Toms, you’re family and I’d go to war for you.”

“Which is why we’re going to make sure every last person affiliated with the Department is dead,” Techno rumbles, red eyes burning.

Tommy turns his head just enough to see Phil with an odd expression on his face. It’s open but his eyes are dark and hard. It almost looks like he’s planning how to win a chess game against a pro.

“Phil?” Wilbur asks, refusing to let Tommy go.

Phil looks at Tommy and his gaze softens. “Of course we’re destroying the Department. That’s never been negotiable. It’s all going.”

“But?” Techno pushes.

Phil doesn’t look away from Tommy, holding eye-contact. “You mentioned a Handler and nothing else. I’ve overheard all of the ex-agents referring to Eret as your primary Handler but I don’t think you were talking about them. Were you?”

Tommy sometimes hates how perceptive Phil is. Having a crime boss as a father figure isn’t all what it’s cut out to be. They simply know what to look for when it comes to lies.

And Tommy didn’t really say much about his Handler. He couldn’t. That man sits in a grey area in his mind, hard to reach and even harder to understand.

The good moments of hair ruffles and bright smiles. The bad moments of disappointed frowns that were worse than any beating.

Tommy still remembers the first time he was ever sent to the isolation chamber. “You’ve disappointed me, Theseus,” Mr. Cicle had whispered. “I thought you were better than this.”

Tommy had been so upset with himself for not being able to throw all of his knives at the bullseye he had eagerly followed the man to the all-white room, almost happy to accept his punishment. Anything to make Mr. Cicle smile at him again. Anything to not let him down.

So Tommy shrugs, drops his gaze. “That’s a little, uh, complicated, man.”

“Oh?” Wilbur asks into his hair, voice in that honeyed tone even though they all know he can’t compel Tommy.

“So Eret is- was,” Tommy stresses, “my primary Handler. They were for all of us. We all naturally followed Eret, and because of who she was, the woman. If either of them said jump, we’d ask how high, you know? That’s how it fucking worked.”

“But not all the time?” Techno asks, arms crossing over his broad chest and Tommy nods.

“When I was a recruit, Dream gave me a trigger phrase. Little Spider. Every time he said it, my brain would assume he was in charge.” He takes in their stares and laughs. It’s a little hollow. Completely unamused. “We all know that’s fucked but he saved my life. But in the Room, some of the older agents would take on young recruits. They’d sometimes be seen as Handler stand-ins as Handlers didn’t tend to follow you on missions.”

Sapnap was his Handler on multiple missions considering Tommy was regularly sent out with him.

George was his Handler in training practices, after deeming Tommy worthy of his time, seeing the determination to survive in his eyes.

Dream was his Handler whenever Dream felt like it, or when he needed to help Tommy along.

Tommy doesn’t hate them or feel anger at that. They were his Handlers, yes. They hurt him, yes. But if punching him in the face, or ensuring he followed through on a hit stopped him from dying, that didn’t matter. They saved him.

It’s messed up and traumatising but the alternative is Tommy in an unmarked grave, cold and still and dead.

“I don’t remember when our- my-“ Tommy winces, squeezing Wilbur’s shirt in his hands, “-Handler first showed up. He was just there.”

““Our”?” Phil asks, softly, hesitantly, hands raised in a surrender. Tommy knows he doesn’t have to respond. He does anyway.

“Handlers were there at the start. For the whole class.” Tommy murmurs, swallowing the painful reminder of Ranboo and Eryn being in his class. “Before we were five, before we knew where we were. They were like our parents.”

“From a psychological standpoint,” Techno says, voice detached. “It makes sense. Children need an attachment figure to latch onto. If they had someone you trusted as a child, the conditioning and manipulation would work easier. It’s why most children of emotionally abusive parents don’t think they’re being abused.”

Tommy blinks. “Uh, sure? He was just always there. I know I don’t like affection and shit because we weren’t allowed to have emotions but he was fucking nice, right? Really nice.”

Tommy thinks back to the hair ruffles and smiles. To being told he's good, to being praised and congratulated.

As he grew older, that aspect became harder to obtain. He needed to constantly do more but back then, it was worth it for a sliver of attention. Theseus would've burnt the world down if Mr. Cicle gave him a hug and told him was being the best.

"Oh," Wilbur hisses, grabbing him tighter before releasing, giving Tommy the space to pull away if he wants to. "That's why you hated when I called you good, when you told me you weren't a dog."

Tommy doesn't know if Wilbur's seeing it with his strange ability that only works when Tommy drops his guard or if he's simply connecting the dots. But either way he's not wrong.

He nods, pulls away but keeps his side pressed against Wilbur's. "When I first got out, I remember seeing a family in the park with a puppy. The way they spoke to the dog, the way one treat for a sit became one treat for multiple commands hit too fucking close to home. That's what it was like. Punishments from guards and teachers but he was nice."

Too nice.

Too nice and Tommy had fallen for it, had lapped it up. So eager to please. So eager to sell his soul away, his mind, his body, his life. Whatever was asked - never asked, demanded, because they could never say no, but at least with Mr. Cicle it felt like asking - he'd do. Instantly. No hesitation. No questions asked.

Nothing was off the table.

If his Handler wanted it done, it was done. Simple as that.

"He was seen as the lesser evil," Techno says, eyes pained but there isn't any pity there. Tommy is thankful for that. "That made him easier to listen to, to trust. None of what happened is your fault, okay?"

Tommy shrugs. "I know," he mumbles. "But I hate that it was that easy."

"If you're dying of thirst," Phil says, "it doesn't matter who is offering you water, or what you have to do to get it. It's about survival, mate. There is nothing wrong with surviving."

"Toms," Wilbur says when Tommy doesn't look at Phil, at any of them.

He knows. He does.

But it still doesn't feel right.

He's killed so many people: men, women, children. He's tortured them, hunted them, stalked them.

And he knows it was him or them. He knows there was a gun pressed to his own temple as he pulled the trigger on someone else.

But it still feels wrong.

“Toms,” Wilbur repeats, gentle fingers nudging at his chin so their eyes can meet. Warm brown eyes, the colour of old, hardback books, meet icy blue. “It wasn’t your fault. You survived.”

“I know,” Tommy murmurs. “Doesn’t feel good though.”

Eryn could possibly still be alive. Hannah, too.

Ranboo could’ve easily taken Tommy’s place. Dream wanted to mentor him from the start. It’s why Dream hangs back on bad days, why he can’t quite look Ranboo in the eye after his nightmares.

Because if Ranboo didn’t teleport away in Siberia, Dream would’ve focused on him. Sapnap had picked Tommy and when he didn’t die, Dream was won over. Just like George.

But Dream picked Ranboo first.

To him, he chose a random boy over his little brother. And no matter how many times Tommy tells him it’s fine (and thinks about the way no one really believed he could do, the way his own Grandmother ignored him because she didn’t see any potential) Dream can’t move on.

The Room will always have its claws hooked deep in them.

Tommy could spend the rest of his life - a God’s existence, never ending - and he’d still be what the Room created, moulded, wanted. A weapon, a machine, a spider. The perfect child soldier.

“Toms-“

“Look,” Tommy interrupts Wilbur, clearing his throat to stop Wilbur speaking. “I haven’t seen my Handler. Not when I went back to Eret, not with Billiam and not with Madame. So I think I blew him up. But knowing my fucking luck, he’s lurking somewhere like a fucking creep.”

The three of them share quick glances before Phil faces Tommy. Clearly they’re dropping it for now. Thankfully.

“Any idea where he could be?” He asks and Tommy snorts.

“Even if I did I wouldn’t be able to find him.”

“Why’s that?” Techno asks, eyebrows furrowed.

“His ability,” Tommy says. “When I was a kid, I had to fight him. Our whole class did. They said it was a bonding exercise. But none of us could land a hit. When I was older, when there was ten of us, we fought him again. Again, none of us could get close. Let alone hit him.”

Phil's head tilts. "A precognition power?"

Tommy shakes his head. "I think I was twelve when he came on a mission with me. It was different because Handlers rarely followed us. Too risky, Eret used to say. But he came."

Tommy remembers sitting next to him on the plane. With their blond hair, people always assumed they were father and son. It was easy for people to assume, for them to slip through the cracks.

"It was supposed to be a simple bodyguarding gig. I never understood why I was there. The mark was important, too important for a recruit." Tommy grabs the end of his shirt, fiddles with it. "I realised after the shitshow that when down, I was there because of what I could sense. But they didn't need me. Not really."

He lifts his shirt and prods at the healed, but slightly raised, skin of his hip. Then he lifts his hands and pulls down the neck of his shirt to prod at his collarbone, where the same indent is.

Being a God may have healed all of his scars bar the ones on his back, but he remembers most of his injuries.

"The one time my Handler wasn't there, I took two bullets for the mark." He meets Phil's eyes, ignoring the blaze of anger in them. "But other than that, we never saw anyone who posed a threat."

"Not once?" Wilbur asks, baffled. "But you got shot?"

Tommy shrugs. "He would... he would stop, sometimes. Or pull the car over. He'd take strange routes. A few times he'd stop meetings before they begun."

"He knew the threats before they were threats," Phil breathes.

"But he wasn't seeing the future?" Techno asks.

"No." Tommy says. "I think it's like Wil's wierd ability 'cause it worked on me. He was sent because like I sense people around him, he could sense when someone was a threat to him. Enhanced self-preservation. That's why I couldn't find him even if I wanted to. He'll know and he'll run and no matter how far I follow, he'll always be one step ahead."

"He knows if you're a threat but I just want to talk," Wilbur's voice lilts and Tommy snorts.

"It doesn't work like that," Tommy says. "I would've told you ages ago and said I need you to get this fucking guy for me. You'd get within a mile of him and he'd sense that fucking Loki is after him."

Wilbur splutters but both Techno and Phil laugh. "He's right, mate," Phil says between chuckles. "We're not exactly subtle."

"So we can find and kill everyone else but the person that really matters?" Wilbur whines. "This fucking sucks. I want a refund."

“On what, life?” Techno drawls and Wilbur lunges for him.

It’s almost comical to watch how easy it is for Techno to wrap an arm around Wilbur’s head and hold him in a headlock. Wilbur struggles, spitting and hissing like a feral cat.

Tommy watches, and notices when Phil sidesteps their playful brawl to stand beside him. A warm hand is placed on his shoulder. Tommy leans into it.

“Can I have his name, mate?” Phil asks, warm and calm and not pushy.

Wilbur is the pushy one. Techno is a solid wall, immovable. Phil is the middle ground.

Tommy thinks of his Handler’s smile and says, “I liked him. That’s fucked, right? But he was... he was nice.”

The recruits never got much of anything nice. The Room didn’t really do well with nice. But Mr. Cicle was nice.

Then again, the woman could be nice. She would praise him and smile at him and there are memories where she’s his mother and Dream is his older brother and they live in a modest house with a mowed lawn-

Tommy swallows. Shakes his head.

Phil remains quiet but he squeezes his shoulder. He waits for Tommy to refuse or tell him.

Tommy can’t find a reason not to tell him. His Handler will run if they get close and he’s not dangerous: he can evade, yes, but he cannot fight. Tommy has fought enough times to know when someone else is as talented as him.

“Blond, grey eyes, likes green, usually wears suits with polished shoes.” Tommy lists. “He isn’t trained like us but he’ll fit in wherever he is. He looks so normal you’ll probably not even realise he’s there.”

Phil hums. “And a name?”

Tommy pauses - Mr. Cicle was nice but Phil has been nothing but kind and warm and the best - and says, “I knew him as Mr. Cicle.”

“Thank you, Tommy,” Phil says, ruffling his hair. “Thank you for telling us and for trusting us with this.”

He steps away, stepping between Techno and Wilbur and they immediately break apart. Phil may be the best but he can be scary.

“Boys,” he mutters and they are both quick to apologise.

They may be Loki and Tyr, respectively, but they’ll always be that second and their father’s sons first.

“I do,” Tommy says before they can leave. He meets Phil’s eyes firmly, pointedly, when he turns to listen to Tommy. “I do trust you.”

It’s stupid and idiotic and everything he was taught not to. But Tommy can’t lie to them. Not when it’s the truth.

They’re his family and he does trust them with this information and with his life.

All of their expressions soften. “Thank you,” Phil repeats, voice strained before he’s marching right back to Tommy and pulling him into a hug, wings and all.

Tommy melts against him.

His family.

A family built on trust and love and respect.

Tommy wonders if he deserves this. He’s a murderer and a good one. He’s not really good at empathy or being sociable. He’s a mess, a creation more spider than boy tangled up in web.

But he thinks of Dan, thinks of a mother he doesn’t remember, thinks of Shroud and knows they never could’ve been a happy family. They were always destined to be what they Room wanted.

Yet they fought at every turn. Dan and his mother to get Tommy out. Shroud creating his own clone to assist him in staying alive. Tommy and burning the place to the ground.

Maybe he doesn’t feel like he deserves this but it’s long overdue.

Tommy wants this and despite being punished for wanting things, he’s allowed this.

He squeezes Phil tighter.

He wants this. He’s allowed this. That’s enough for now.

Phil sits at his desk, staring at the wood before him. His laptop is open, his phone sitting next to his hand.

Techno sits opposite him, massaging his hands as they shake. Wilbur stands behind him, nimble fingers collecting sections of pink hair to braid.

They’ve been quiet since Tommy left for Niki’s bakery. Supposedly Niki is teaching Phil’s sons how to make brownies. Phil is happy that they’re doing normal things, especially after the hell they’ve endured.

Phil knows Tommy blames himself for escaping and bringing the Room to their attention, for involving them, but they all know he’s not at fault. He is a child, was one when he showed

up, it was only a matter of time before the Room got its reckoning and Phil could've walked away at any point.

But he didn't.

Because Wilbur showed up with a child assassin with big, blue eyes and a lost expression on his face and Phil has never been able to say no to his children. For them, the world. And this boy needed someone to trust him, to help him, to love him. Phil was more than happy to slot into that role.

He looks at his laptop, his phone.

They need to find Tommy's Handler.

Phil wants him dead.

But if what Tommy says is true - which it is, Tommy is an exceptional liar but he only lies when it comes to saving his life - then that'll be harder than he thought.

Then again-

An idea buzzes alive in his mind. He lets it sit for a second, analysing it before letting it settle.

He grabs his phone, dials a familiar number and waits for it to connect.

"Phil?" Sam's voice filters through the speakers. "Is everything okay?"

"You have access to the Vault's paperwork, correct? So you have access to all past inmates?"

There's a pause. Both of his sons openly watch him.

"Yes?" Sam settles on. "Why?"

"Alyssa and Callahan were there when I got out," Phil says. "I've heard Dream mention their abilities before. You wouldn't happen to have an address or phone number listed, would you?"

Wilbur looks confused. Techno laughs. "He can find anyone," he says with a giant grin. "Phil, since when have you had all the brain cells?"

Wilbur snorts, realisation dawning on his face. "He stole them from Tommy when he left."

Sam is silent on the line but Phil waits him out. And rolls his eyes at his boys.

"Why do you want to know?" Sam asks, slowly.

"I need to find someone who hurt one of my sons," Phil says, calmly, but without revealing anything. Tommy trusted him, trusted all three of them, with a lot of information that Phil doubts he's told anyone else. Phil refuses to break that tentative trust.

More quiet. Then, “I’ll call you back when I have access to their files. Darien kept a lot of... illegal imprisonments buried.”

“Thank you, Sam.” Phil says, and means it. Sam puts the phone down. Phil smiles.

He’ll find this Mr. Cicle. He will. And when he does, he’ll kill him.

That thought does bring a smile to his face.

For now, he opens his laptop and clicks on his emails. “While Sam finds what we need,” he says. “Any thoughts on what we’ll need at the UN?”

He’s met with twin grins of bloodthirstiness.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, we will be meeting Mr Cicle soon ;)

Chapter 35

Chapter Notes

We're approaching the end *omg*

TW// past brainwashing, past child abuse, mention of child death, mental health discussions, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Ranboo is the one that suggests it, in a quiet tone and refusing to make eye contact. Tommy, at first, is hesitant to agree. He doesn't want this for Ranboo, or for Tubbo.

But life isn't fair.

And both of them have killed willingly.

It's how he finds himself, surrounded by agents, in one of the Syndicate's training rooms, watching as they spar. Tubbo is once again reluctant - he still doesn't like fighting - but Corpse offers, along with Sapnap.

They find out Sean is the only one that can floor Ranboo easily. According to Ranboo, he can't mimic him: Sean is too unpredictable.

They also find out that Ranboo handles a sword as though he's always fought with one. And that his style is that of Techno's.

It's why Tommy asks Tubbo to find a YouTube clip of a martial arts tournament. He shows it to Ranboo and then tells him to fight him. And just like that, Ranboo is following the movements as if he's fought like this for years rather than seconds.

"They've improved your mimicry," George says, watching them with sharp eyes.

"And you've put on muscle." Tommy comments, kicking him in the shin, twisting his body and throwing Ranboo onto the maps. "You're quicker, too."

He doesn't say more efficient. Even if he wants to. Because he is.

With his ability to learn from one look, and the fact he's been training for however long they've been gone, he rivals an agent. He's not as good, not yet, but Tommy wouldn't be surprised if he kept it up, he could easily fight them and win within a year.

Tommy can't help but see who Ranboo could've become if he hadn't had teleported away in Siberia.

This, as he flips Corpse and kicks Sapnap, is Lethe.

This is a Huntsman Spider.

But Ranboo isn't the only one that's changed.

Sean is angrier in his fights. The Widows have returned to acting like interchangeable parts of a machine, reading each other and moving accordingly with grace and power. Tubbo is more withdrawn, a little quiet.

So when Niki suggests dancing, a lot of them look quick to run.

But Tommy has never been a quitter, or really someone that runs from fights. He grins and replies, "Sure, I'm down. Someone needs to get Purpled, though."

"Why?" Sykunno asks, head tilted.

"I can count cards now, and he's semi-fluent in Russian but I want to know more about his casino lifestyle. I teach him ballet, he tells me important shit." Tommy's smile widens. "Win fucking win, boys."

Tubbo is the one to contact Purpled and that's how Tommy finds himself before a wall of mirrors, pointe shoes tied to his feet as he shows Purpled the ropes. Punz is being taught by Sapnap, who is being a lot less educational than Tommy and a lot more pushy.

"I'm not that flexible!" Purpled snaps as Tommy lifts his leg up and Tommy rolls his eyes.

"Then stretch, you idiot."

"I will hit you."

"I would love to see you fucking try, bitch."

"Boys," Niki says, not shouts. She doesn't have to raise her voice for them both to back down immediately. Beside her, Jack laughs so hard he falls out of the stance he was in and starts coughing.

"Sorry, Niki," Tommy murmurs.

"Yeah, sorry," Purpled mumbles as he lifts his arms up, eyes tracking Tommy's fluid movements.

Surprisingly enough, he's quite good at it for a beginner. He's definitely not going to be going pro any time soon but after a couple of nudges and repetition, he's able to follow along somewhat easily.

Ranboo and Tubbo are behind them, also following along but at their own pace. Ranboo is a little stiff but with his copycat ability, he's moving as if he was born to after a second of watching them.

Tubbo, much like Purpled, picks it up rather quickly. There's an elegance to his movement that Purpled lacks, though. He seems comfortable on the wooden floor, before the mirrors. There's a fluidity to his dance but also a freedom that all of the agents can't achieve.

Tubbo dances because he wants to, because he feels like it.

The agents dance like marionettes, like dolls designed to dance and never stop. Their movements are quick and sharp and well-oiled. Too good, the best they can be.

"Is everything supposed to hurt?" Purpled asks Tommy as he pirouettes sloppily.

Tommy laughs. "Yeah. Fucking sucks right?"

"Why do people do this for fun?" Purpled pants, blond hair falling across his eyes as he stumbles to a messy stop.

"They're sadists--"

"Masochists," Dream interrupts from where he's watching. George, Minx, Sykunno, Leslie and Brooke all join him, declining the offer.

Tina and Rae dance together, one the White Swan, the other the Black Swan. Sean is leaping and dancing as chaotically as he fights, but there are movements he's performing that seasoned professionals would cry to see performed so precisely. Corpse and Ethan have teamed up to show Mark, who keeps getting distracted by a prancing Sean, and though it must be years since Ethan was taught under the harsh stares of the Room's trainers, he can still keep up with them.

Tommy pauses. The Room, always lingering, always with them, no matter how far or fast they run.

And then he blinks, turning to look down at Dream, eyes tracing the scar across his nose. "What?"

"Sadists are our trainers," George says for him. "Masochists enjoy doing something because it's painful. So people who do this for fun would be masochists."

Tommy continues to blink at them. Then he smiles an innocent smile. "And how would you know this, George? Hmm? Something you'd like to share with the class?"

Sapnap stumbles over a step as Dream's face burns bright red. George is as unruffled as ever but Tommy can see the pink staining the tips of his ears.

But instead of giving in to the taunt he simply cracks his neck and calmly says, "You have three seconds to run."

Tommy may act dumb but he's very smart. He takes the offered time (a small mercy) and immediately legs it out of the studio, cursing the fact he's wearing pointe shoes, all while Purpled shouts about how terrible he is of a ballet teacher.

Tommy makes it onto the second roof when George catches him, tackles him and proceeds to tickle the life out of him. All while he's screaming for peace and laughing so hard he's crying.

In that moment, when George sits back with a satisfied smile on his face and Tommy wheezes, he realises that he may not have had a childhood, let alone a good one, but he has this. He has three brothers, two big brothers, two younger brothers, a sister, a biological little brother, a dad and multiple friends and other family members.

As much as he wishes he could change the past, wishes he could live a normal life, if it meant never experiencing this, never meeting his brothers, he knows he'd refuse.

Every time.

Because to him, this is what life is about. This makes him happy. This makes him feel human.

It's messy and complicated and hard but Tommy wouldn't change it, wouldn't change anything,
if it means he gets to keep them.

Scott stares at the man before him and wonders if it's too late to decide to become the boss of the FBI. He's heard that the CIA are recruiting so maybe that's an option if he leaves here alive and with his sanity.

"Hello," he greets when the man continues to stare at him. "If you're going to stare, I'm going to go back to my paperwork."

"You're working for the Department," the man says, accusingly. Scott refuses to look at the gun loosely held in a pale hand and focuses on curly, brown hair and brown eyes.

"No," he says, lightly. "I'm not. I've been trying to weed them out--"

"I used to work for them," the man says. "I know when I'm amongst my own."

Scott hums. "A Huntsman Spider, I presume."

"Stampy," the man snaps. "Why are you working for--"

"If you mean a few people on my payroll who work undercover, then I assure you they work for me and me alone." Scott interrupts. "I can't watch everyone all of the time but I work for my country. I ensure the safety of American citizens and our allies--"

"Then why do you need power enhancers?"

Scott-

Scott pauses at that, caught off guard. He straightens, and Stampy's lips twitch at the reaction.

Scott may be the current head of S.H.I.E.L.D. but he's not a trained assassin. He has no way to hold up against someone like Stampy, not if he tries anything.

"They're safer in our hands than other organisations," Scott settles on a half-truth. "Why? Would you prefer Department X have them?"

Stampy tilts his head. For someone who looks plain and normal, there's a coldness in his eyes only found in killers. A void of emptiness.

"They tried," Stampy says. "They failed. They'll try again. You didn't answer my question."

"I said-" Scott tries. Stampy's eyes narrow. His hand tightens on the gun.

"You lied," Stampy interrupts, voice quiet, calm. His English accent unnerves Scott, considering he's expecting a Russian one.

Yet every agent he meets, not one has spoken in their original accent.

The Department likes their agents to fit in seamlessly, as if they grew up in the country they're currently infiltrating. Their Red Room operatives are always the hardest to find because of it.

Scott's found that the easiest way to catch them out is to say something casually. Reference a familiar TV show, hum a line of a semi-famous song, talk about preparing a simple meal. It always trips them up.

They are more weapon than person: they can kill just fine but a genuine smile looks too dangerous on their faces.

"S.H.I.E.L.D. is a safer place for them," Scott reiterates.

"And?" Stampy asks.

There's a shift from a ceiling tile.

Stampy's body twists.

Scott doesn't hear the gunshot.

He does watch as Stampy falls though. Collapsing to the carpet of his office, blood pooling from the hole in his head.

Scott stands as someone slips from the vent and lands on both feet before him. The man steps away from the growing blood puddle and meets Scott's eyes.

“And S.H.I.E.L.D. are worried about the growing threat in L’Manberg,” the man says. “Am I right? I think I’m right. Niko Constantin, nice to meet you, Director.”

“I’ve heard of you,” Scott says, because the name is familiar and he’s desperately trying not to panic. If he’d known outing the traitors amidst his organisation would lead to this... he would still do it but that’s besides the point.

Niko grins. “Everyone seems to want to talk to me recently.” He tilts his head like Stampy did. “Was I right? Are you scared of us?”

“Oh, scared of assassins trained since birth to infiltrate and kill? No, I’m actually relaxed knowing you’re all here,” he replies, sarcastically.

Niko laughs, runs a hand through messy reddish-brown hair. The other grips the base of the sniper rifle from where he’s thrown it up to rest on his shoulder, muzzle pointing at the ceiling where he dropped from.

“Look, I’m not here to kill you, okay.” Niko says. “Those power enhancers? Not my concern. Do what you want. As for your spies? Also not my concern unless I find them in the field. Then I’m killing them but I think that’s fair.”

“Then why are you here?” Scott asks, politely but with a little bite.

Niko raises his eyebrows. “What, you wanted me to let this guy shoot you?”

“You’re also holding a gun,” Scott points out and Niko laughs again.

“Right.” He briefly glances down at Stampy before looking up. All traces of humour are gone from his expression. “I only need to know one thing.”

“Which is?”

Niko smiles a wolffish smile, one that makes Scott shiver. “General Dreykov. You wouldn’t happen to know where the rat’s run to, would you?”

That night, a man in Moscow gets a phone call. “Niko Constantin is out and about,” Scott Smajor says from the speaker. “He knows enough.”

“But not my name,” Mr. Cicle responds. Not that it’d matter. He’d feel it if someone tried to come after him.

“He’s a Wolf Spider,” Scott says and he has to pause at that.

“I didn’t expect you to know that term.”

“I have eyes everywhere. Ears everywhere else.” Scott replies.

“Is that a threat?” He asks, idly, staring at the unopened cigarette packet on his coffee table.

“Does it have to be?” Scott says. “You’ve been instrumental in helping me fix my crumbling organisation considering you were the one to start mentioning the infiltration.”

Well, after the Room blew up because of one of his own, he decided to help out an enemy. After all, the enemy of his enemy turned out to be a good friend.

“You flatter me. You knew something was happening.”

“But not who.”

Mr. Cicle hums. He leans forward and fiddles with the packet. “What do you want me to do? You wouldn’t call, and then threaten, if you weren’t concerned.”

“I may not know everything but I know enough. Constantin wants Dreykov and like the other agents milling around, I wouldn’t be surprised if he started outsourcing.”

“Where do you want me?” Mr. Cicle asks, throwing the packet down and standing. His go-bag is tucked in the bottom of his wardrobe. Easily grabbed and pre-filled.

“Not Switzerland,” Scott says.

Mr. Cicle pauses at that. Not Switzerland? Interesting. He assumes this has something to do with the UN but he’s not going to ask when it’s not his place.

“Not Switzerland,” he agrees, looking at the world map taped to his wall. He grins at a particular place. Hiding in plain sight. “I’ll check in when I’ve moved.”

“Good.” Scott says and hangs up.

Mr. Cicle grabs his go-bag and pulls out his phone. He has a flight to catch to America.

Tommy has a mission. Well. He has two missions but one is easier to achieve than the other. And the other mission is probably going to be upsetting, which is annoying. He doesn’t like crying. Or emotions, really.

So he tries to ignore the fact he’s going to have to speak to someone else and focuses on Mission Number One: Quackity.

Now he said it was going to be easier but when it comes to Quackity, and getting him alone, that may be harder than expected.

When he sees Karl draped over Quackity’s shoulders, with Sapnap’s head in his lap, he sighs. Yes, this is going to be annoying but not as annoying as dealing with Mission Number Two.

He’s really not looking forward to Mission Number Two.

“Hey!” Charlie greets when Tommy walks into the office. “How you doing, Tomathy?”

“I’m fucking fantastic,” Tommy replies, studying the green shirt he’s wearing that looks like toxic waste. “That shirt is making me blind. What the fuck are you wearing, man?”

“He’s embraced the goop.” All three men in front of him say in unison. It’s mildly horrifying.

Tommy blinks as Charlie nods, fingers pushing his glasses back up his nose. “Yep! The goop and I are one.”

“Uh, okay?” Tommy settles on, patting him on the shoulder. “I’m proud of you?”

Charlie beams at him. It’s blinding. “Thank you!” With that, he bounces away and then, half way down the corridor, he slips through the floor.

Tommy sighs but can’t keep the smile from his face. Charlie can make Tommy smile even at the worst of times. Maybe he needs to bring him along to Mission Number Two.

“Tommy!” Quackity greets even as tone bleeds exhaustion. Based on the bruises under his eyes that are borderline impressive, Tommy guesses he’s not sleeping well. “What brings you to Las Nevadas?”

“Wanted to talk to you, big man.” Tommy says. “Alone though.”

Sapnap lifts his head to stare at Tommy. Karl’s eyes glow a deeper gold before he grins. Ah, timelines. Tommy nearly forgot. He guesses his chat is going to go alright.

“Is everything-“ Sapnap tries but Karl is already pulling away from Quackity, flitting over to the end of the couch to grab Sapnap’s hands - fingers laced together - and tugging him up.

“Everything’s fine!” Karl speaks for Tommy. “C’mon you promised me skateboarding!”

Sapnap rapidly blinks as Karl keeps pulling at his hands, guiding him out of the room. “I did?”

“Do you even know how to skateboard?” Tommy asks him, then pauses. Does Tommy know how to skateboard? Maybe he needs to ask Purpled. Out of Tubbo, Ranboo and Purpled, he seems the most likely to do it.

Sapnap stumbles and turns his blinking to Tommy. “Uh, maybe?” He tries. Skateboarding wasn’t really the Room’s top priority when it came to teaching child assassins.

“Then we’ll learn!” Karl continues, refusing to budge as he pulls and pulls and pulls until they disappear out of the door, which slams shut after their departure.

Tommy frowns. He can ice skate. They were taught that alongside dancing with knives on their pointe shoes. He vaguely remembers something about rollerskating but maybe that’s more of a strange dream or false memory than something concrete.

“So,” Quackity says, interrupting Tommy’s plans on getting Purpled to teach him how to skateboard. “What did you want to talk about?”

Tommy moves through the office to sit atop his desk, facing him. He's been planning this for a while now but getting the words out is a lot harder than simply letting them spill from his mouth.

"I- Well I- um." Tommy pauses, digs the palms of his hands into his eyes and then exhales one, long breath. "You know I was like experimented on and shit?"

Quackity frowns at him. "Yeah. Is everything okay?"

"When Dream was carrying me out of there," Tommy continues, looking somewhere over Quackity's shoulder, at the bookshelves. "I was high on shitty meds and pain and I remember saying some shit. It made me realise that I haven't told anyone what I went through. So I told Wilbur-"

"Seriously?" Quackity interrupts but there's a smile on his face, pulling at the scar Techno gave him, that tells Tommy he's trying to lighten the situation.

It's why Tommy rolls his eyes and says, "Save the custody battle shit with your ex for later."

"We're not exes!"

"Are you sure about that?" Tommy asks with an eyebrow raise and laughs when Quackity flushes.

"We have never dated!"

"Have you considered it though?" Tommy presses, trying not to laugh when Quackity's blush gets darker. "I mean, I've never kissed my friends-"

"We're enemies!"

"Or enemies on the lips before, big Q." Tommy finishes, eyebrows wiggling.

Quackity groans, pressing his red face into his hands. "You're a gremlin, you know that? I'm in a happy, committed relationship." Quackity opens his fingers for Tommy to see his eyes and emphasise, "I love them."

Tommy stares at him.

Quackity stares back.

Tommy's lips twitch and he rolls his eyes. "Whatever, man. Love who you love. And if that ends up also involving-"

"Tommy, I swear-"

"-Wilbur then I respect that."

Quackity groans, covering his face once again, which gives Tommy enough time to pull himself together. He can't be the Huntsman here because he's not a spider, not now.

He's a person.

So he swallows, takes a deep breath and says, "I owe you my life."

Quackity's head snaps up so quickly Tommy can hear his neck click. His eyes are blown wide and his mouth is gaping open. Tommy can't make eye contact.

"W-what?" Quackity breathes.

"I owe you my life," Tommy repeats.

"But I--"

"I was Theseus for a really long time," Tommy says, speaking quickly because he knows if he stops, he'll never get these words out. "I was more spider than person. It's all I fucking knew and being normal or human was... I didn't think I could do it. Be it. Survive like that."

Quackity is openly staring at him, hanging off every word but he's not interrupting anymore. He clearly understands the gravity of what Tommy is trying to say.

"I ran and ran and ran and tried being a waiter and slept in a shitty apartment with godawful water pressure and I thought that was okay. I thought I was doing a good job at pretending."

He wasn't.

He's learnt that just surviving isn't what life is about. Surviving was all he knew and then he stumbled into L'Manberg and suddenly he found out he could live.

He realised people could be kind and not cruel. He realised that love wasn't just for children. He realised he could be from somewhere and have a place in this world.

"Then you offered me a job," Tommy says, quietly. "And I could do crime. I'm fucking brilliant at crime."

"You are," Quackity agrees, just as quiet. "Best pickpocket I've ever employed."

Tommy grins, proudly but keeps his head ducked. If he sees his face, he'll run and not finish what he came to say.

"Damn right," he replies. "You showed me--" He chokes on the words and hastily swallows. "You showed me that family isn't defined by blood and that it could be made. Las Nevadas is the first place I've ever felt comfortable in."

"Tommy..." Quackity mumbles, sounding close to tears and Tommy isn't far off.

"You didn't care who I was or what I'd done and- and I--" Tommy keeps swallowing. "Phil is my dad, okay? I've decided and I'm allowed to do that but you gave me a purpose that was more than being a killing machine. You gave me a reason to keep trying. You gave me Wilbur and all your bullshit weird frenemies shit aside, he gave me a family. A real one. And I owe you my life for that."

“Tommy,” Quackity tries again but Tommy’s not done.

“I know you’ve been through shit and I killed Wilbur and it’s all fucking messy and confusing and batshit insane but you’re the reason I’m free today.” Tommy finally lifts his head and meets dark eyes overflowing with tears. “You’re the first person to treat me with kindness, treat me like a human being. I know that doesn’t mean much but-“

Quackity stands up and gentle hands - prepared to leave if Tommy so chooses because he has choices now - pull him closer until Tommy is curled around Quackity.

“Tommy,” Quackity repeats. “That means the world to me. I’m fucking disgusted that it was me of all people when you’re already in your late teens to show you that but I’m more than glad I could be there for you.”

He pulls away and meets Tommy’s eyes. “I would do it again,” he says and Tommy chokes on the sob in his throat.

“Even-“

“Even dealing with everything we’ve gone through,” Quackity agrees. “I’d do it all again. For Sappap. For you. For the rest of you. You deserve to be happy, Tommy. You deserve to live.”

Tommy drops his head onto Quackity’s shoulders to hide the tears.

“You saved me,” Tommy whispers.

“I’m so glad I did,” Quackity replies into his hair. “I’m so glad I met you.”

Tommy doesn’t know how long he stands there.

But when he pulls away and Quackity ruffles his hair, telling him he’ll forever be welcome within Las Nevadas’ walls, he leaves feeling complete. He leaves with a smile and bloodshot eyes.

Then, mustering up the courage needed, he heads towards the Heroes Tower.

Time for Mission Number Two.

Wilbur takes one look at Phil’s thunderous expression - and the crows also seeming to be glaring at the open laptop screen - as he walks into his office and sighs. “What now?” He asks, fingers prodding at the scars over his mouth.

“Tommy told us that the agents were made to kill again, correct?” Phil starts and Wilbur nods, shutting the door behind him with his foot and drops into a seat opposite his dad. “With every gang currently shitting themselves because-“

“You’re very scary,” Wilbur coos and Phil flips him off.

“Piss off,” he says, amused, and Wilbur smiles in victory at seeing his dad calm slightly. “Well, because of that, they’re telling me whatever they know.”

“Right,” Wilbur says. “I have no idea where you’re going with this.”

“S.H.I.E.L.D. agents have been dying.” Phil comments. He lifts a hand to one of the crows that has started to peck at his blond hair.

Wilbur blinks at him. “What?”

“Quiet murders,” Phil continues. “No suicides. They’re all murders. Clean headshots.”

“You think it’s them,” Wilbur murmurs, knowing he’s right in his assumption. “And the Red Room pinky message system?”

“Nothing was missing either from the body or the houses but I think the murders are the message.” Phil says, frowning once again at his laptop screen. “But I don’t know why. The Department is falling by our hands, not S.H.I.E.L.D.’s.”

“Unless...” Wilbur breathes, thinking it all over. He’s always liked puzzles, always like solving things, being better than everyone else in the room, smarter.

Techno can hit harder and when it comes to fighting, he’ll always win against Wilbur.

But at chess? Even Phil loses to him.

“Yes?” Phil says, meeting his eyes.

“Why hasn’t Smajor called us?” Wilbur starts. “He knows we’re the Syndicate and through Grian, he knows that we are technically responsible. What isn’t he telling us? I can’t do the equation unless I have all the variables and if one of our agents kills one of theirs, we should’ve been the first to be told. Or investigated.”

"You think Scott’s hiding something?" Phil asks, head tilted, shoulders rolling as he contains wings beneath skin.

"He's a spy." Wilbur breathes. "Phil, he's the spy. He runs America’s spy organisation. His secrets have secrets."

“So what are your theories?”

Wilbur leans forward, chin resting on his fist as he places his elbow on the desk. “If it were me, I would assume the Syndicate and the agents were working together at the very least. That’s what S.H.I.E.L.D. assumed before, that we were in fact owning-“ He spits that word out. “-them.”

Phil winces and the crows at his shoulders squawk.

“With that in mind,” Wilbur continues. “I would be immediately investigating the Syndicate in fear they were turning against me.”

“Which he hasn’t done.”

“Why hasn’t he? Why not invest-“ Wilbur stops. Pauses. Thinks it over.

“What?” Phil pushes.

“What if he already is?” Wilbur whispers. “Looking into us, monitoring. He hasn’t involved himself because we’re cleaning up a mess he can’t. S.H.I.E.L.D. know about the Department but they couldn’t do anything. We are.”

Phil eyes narrow. “Kill two birds with one stone,” he says and Wilbur stares at him.

“That’s only one bird, Phil. Or are you getting stupid in your old age.”

“Shut.” Phil says with an eye-roll and grin and Wilbur laughs. He only quietens with Phil frowns. “It is two birds when he can say we’re the ones making them kill his agents. The American Government has been looking for reasons to try and take us out. The only reason they haven’t is because we’re too powerful.”

“And now even more so with the agents.” Wilbur breathes, eyes widening. “Russian agents at that. Fuck, they’re going to try and bury us. With Puffy being practically the last Hero left in this fucking city, L’Manberg will be classed as lawless.”

“If the army shows up, they’ll panic and attack.” Phil whispers. “They’ll do what they’ve been trained to do and attack, making them more of a threat.”

Wilbur can see it now, agents who just want peace, forced once again to fight.

Tommy, who has opened up to them, who sees L’Manberg as a home (his first true home). Tommy, their little brother who has survived so much and is just now learning to live.

Wilbur has the strange, Techno-urge, to punch something. Hard. Preferably hard enough to let the pain stop his rising rage.

Phil calls for Techno and then lays it out for him. His pink hair is falling out of his bun and the way his hands aren’t shaking tells Wilbur he’s been reading. He’s always calmer after a good book.

“Do we want to make a threat out of Scott?” Techno asks, rhetorically, after a moment of digesting all of the information. “He’s a better ally than enemy. And we’re assuming this is what is happening. For all we know, he doesn’t have your number and refuses to come and see. Maybe he’s busy.”

“We hope he is,” Wilbur adds.

“But if he’s not-“

“Then we prepare for the worst and hope for the best,” Techno interrupts Phil with a shrug. “We get ready to fight S.H.I.E.L.D. but hope that we don’t have to.”

“When did you get wise and profound?” Wilbur asks and ducks when Techno halfheartedly swipes at him.

“I’ve always been-“

“Bullshit!”

Phil just sighs as Techno tackles Wilbur, trying to grapple him into a headlock. “Please,” he whispers, going unheard, “please don’t destroy my office.”

Mission Number Two involves standing in the lobby of the Heroes Tower and staring at Sam. With his green hair and new frown lines on his forehead and smell of gunpowder.

“Hi.” Tommy murmurs. He’s panicked and a little scared and maybe he’s worried about how this will go because it’s important.

This is important to him.

“Hey,” Sam replies. “I can go and get Puffy for you. She’s dealing with-“

“Uh no.” Tommy interrupts. “I want- uh, wanted to speak to you. If you want. If that’s okay.”

Sam blinks at him and then nods. “That’s okay, yeah. What did you-“

“Let’s walk!” Tommy interrupts, the instinctive need to run rising in his chest.

This isn’t Quackity or Wilbur. Quackity, who got dragged into his mess but followed mostly for his fiancé. Wilbur, who has spent months reassuring Tommy that he’s not at fault for killing him.

This is Sam. Sam, who had a brother that Tommy murdered ruthlessly.

Tommy steps closer to the doors and Sam seems to study him before easily falling into step beside him. “Lead the way,” he says, quietly, and Tommy nods, striding forward.

Once the open air hits him, he can breathe a little easier.

He doesn’t have a place in mind exactly but he knows he wants to be high up. His shoulders roll and he turns to an alley.

“Hope you can keep up,” he murmurs, lighthearted and Sam snorts as Tommy starts to climb a fire escape.

Something about the action, about remembering training to be able to do this, has his mind calming. Sam may be dangerous but Tommy is a killer and he only wants to talk.

Once atop a roof, he makes his way to another. Jumping up and over, he turns to find Sam following behind at a slower pace but not a reluctant one.

Tommy raises his eyebrows. “Are you getting old?”

“Oh my god,” Sam groans. “I am not-“

“Old man says what?” Tommy rushes and Sam blinks at him.

“What?”

Tommy immediately bursts into loud laughter and skips across the roof, up to a higher one. He makes the jump with ease, crawling up and grinning down at Sam, who looks ever so slightly winded.

“I don’t really do this,” Sam pants. “And I’m not a Hero anymore.”

“Look how your cardio is suffering!” Tommy says, waving his hand at the entirety of Sam.

Sam rolls his eyes. “I could take you in a fight.”

“No, you couldn’t,” Tommy says, lips twitching. “But you’re more than welcome to try.”

Sam pauses, hands on his knees. “If you’re going to insult my fitness levels-“

“So you agree you couldn’t beat me?” Tommy grins.

“-at least do it on stable ground,” Sam finishes, ignoring Tommy.

Tommy huffs, walks over the edge and sits down, swinging his legs over. “Fine. We can talk here. But I’m only doing this because you look on the brink of fucking collapse.”

“Why thank you,” Sam replies, sarcastically. He does join Tommy in the edge, though.

They sit there for a long moment, both looking out to the horizon. In front of them, L’Manberg sits in its glory, giant buildings paired with bright lights and an overall air of tension. Behind the buildings, the sun is dipping low, sky of blue fading and orange begins to ebb over.

Tommy collects his thoughts, orders them and then exhales. His wings pull from his skin and his feathers ruffle in the air.

Sam side-eyes him but doesn’t say anything. Tommy is thankful.

“You were my favourite Hero,” he speaks to the slow sunset. “I don’t know if I ever told you but in the Room, they would show us videos of Heroes and Villains throughout the world. We had to expect the unexpected. We had to know you and how to defeat you. I always liked you.”

Sam looks surprised. “Really? You liked me?”

Tommy shrugs. “Trigger was cool. Plus, I do love a fucking explosion.”

Sam laughs. “Thanks.”

“You’re welcome,” Tommy responds without thinking. He pauses, continues, “I think, at the time, watching those videos gave me some shred of hope that there were good people in the

world. The Room was shit out of luck in that department.”

“I remember you telling me you weren’t used to kindness.” Sam murmurs and Tommy nods, fingers fiddling with the ring on his thumb.

“I’m still not.” Tommy whispers. “Michelle, my therapist, said it’s survivors guilt, imposter syndrome. Why me, you know? Why do I get to live when the rest of them, when Eryn-?” He chokes on his words, chin dropping to his chest to hide the tears.

He’s not used to being so open. To sharing his pain. To showing his vulnerabilities.

But Sam deserves to know.

“In the Room,” he says, ignoring the concerned look Sam is sending him, smoke billowing from his mask. “We were taught to not care about anything. Love is for children. Friendship leads to complacency and complacency leads to death. I had to fight for me and me alone. Even if that meant killing my classmates.”

At this point, he’s used to this. Speaking about the horrors he’s experienced.

To him, it was normal. His normal. His life.

So the words pour from his mouth easily, detachedly. He sounds cold and indifferent despite how wrong that is.

“I didn’t have a family. Or friends. I wasn’t allowed to.” Tommy says. “So when I came to L’Manberg, after everything I was taught and told, it was really fucking weird.”

Sam laughs at that, even if it’s a little hollow. “Yeah?”

“You’re all so nice and fucking considerate.” Tommy groans. “I mean, the Angel of fucking Death was talking to me and being calm and just what the fuck? It was so weird. You’re all weird.”

“We try,” Sam says and Tommy rolls his eyes.

“And you all infected me with your weirdness because suddenly I was caring about you fucks,” Tommy continues. “I had emotions. Which, honestly, don’t recommend. They’re a bitch.”

“They can be annoying and confusing,” Sam agrees, running a hand through his green hair.

Tommy’s feathers ruffle, wings tightening around him. He keeps fiddling with his ring. “So I start caring, right? And all this shit goes down and it’s fucking wild but I keep going because that’s all I’ve ever done. Survive. So I survive and I care and it’s horrible and then-“

And then the Warden shows up.

Tommy loses the family he just got in a matter of minutes.

The Huntsman woke up and Tommy did all he could to get the ones he loved back.

Even at the expense of Sam's feelings.

"I won't apologise for killing him," Tommy says. "It would be a lie. But I am sorry for how it went down, that he didn't die quickly, that it hurt you."

Because it wasn't the Huntsman that killed Darien. It was Tommy.

Tommy, consumed with rage and needing a way to release it.

Sam hums but says nothing. His eyes are staring at the horizon, smoke puffing from the mask he wears with each breath. Tommy doesn't push.

He sits back on his hands, wings curling around his shoulders and waits.

They're silent for a long moment.

And then Sam says, "While I wish you didn't kill him, he wasn't a good man."

"I'm still sorry," Tommy says.

A warm palm drops atop his shoulder and squeezes. "I know," Sam replies. "Thank you for telling me. I do forgive you. I've forgiven you for a long time."

"Really?" Tommy whispers and Sam nods, lifts that warm palm to ruffle blond hair.

"Yeah, Tommy. What Darien did was wrong and there was always going to be someone with an axe to grind. It's not your fault that it was you." He turns back to the sunset. "I miss him and I hate that we weren't ever able to rekindle our past bond but he chose to be the Warden. I chose to be a Hero, to be Trigger. Our paths diverged and I don't blame you or hate you, okay?"

Tommy nods, swallowing roughly. "Thank you."

Another hair ruffle. "You're too hard on yourself."

"Michelle says that," he replies. "We're working on it."

"Good." Sam faces him again and Tommy swears he's smiling. "I'm proud of you. For getting out of that horrifying situation and building yourself a life."

Tommy blinks at him, trying desperately to not cry. "Stop," he whispers, thinking of Wilbur's familiar phrase. "Or I will sob on you. Disgustingly. All snot and--"

"Okay, okay!" Sam laughs. "I'm easing up on the emotions."

"Thank fuck. I'm all emotion-ed out."

Sam laughs again and Tommy feels lighter. A weight has been lifted from his shoulders. Two, now, with Mission Number Two being complete.

Does this one talk fix everything? No.

But is it a good start? Absolutely.

In the dying light of the sun, bathing them both in gold, Tommy thinks he's starting to understand the appeal of being human. Emotions are annoying and confusing and sometimes painful, but it reminds him that he can feel. That he's no longer that scared boy stuck in a web, that scared boy being moulded into a spider.

Tommy smiles, breathing in the air and letting his wings stretch so that one can wrap around Sam.

Later that night, Phil approaches Dream and asks about finding Alyssa and Callahan. Dream laughs, telling him that Sapnap already asked for Karl.

But he easily hands over a phone number.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will be the last chapter of Plot ;)

Chapter 36

Chapter Notes

Final Plot Chapter ;)

TW// past brainwashing, past child abuse, past child death, past torture, past experimentation, past medical experiments, past human trafficking mention, scars, injury mention, death mention, minor character death x2, manipulation, blood, weaponry, swearing

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy stares at the array of people and thinks maybe this is a bad idea. Actually, this might be his worst idea to date. And Tommy has made a lot of questionable ideas.

“We’re really doing this, huh?” Sapnap asks and Tommy nods, fiddling with the ring on his thumb.

“Kind of regretting it,” Tommy murmurs and Dream snorts. George simply rolls his eyes but his shoulders are stiff and all three of them refuse to budge from Tommy’s side. So much so, the receptionist at their hotel thought Tommy was a diplomat’s son because of his ‘bodyguards.’

“Say the word and I’ll cause a distraction,” Sean says, rocking back and forth on his heels. He looks eager, too eager, and Tommy gets the very distinct impression that none of them want to be here.

Only the idea that running would be cowardly - the Black Widow and Huntsman Spider do not run, they fight until they win or die - keeps them in place.

“Calm,” Phil says, stepping closer and laying a hand at the back of his neck. Tommy leans into it, thankful for the reminder his family are here. “If you want to leave-“

“I know.” Tommy says, watching as Puffy and Drista stride forward to greet some of the UN officials. They seem confident and the officials only look slightly disturbed by the mini-army standing behind Puffy.

Tommy did enjoy when they stepped into the lobby and every security personnel there suddenly grew pale.

The man she’s talking to says something and Drista laughs before bouncing towards them. Her blonde hair is tied into two space buns and with no hesitation, she’s jumping onto Dream’s back. He catches her, not even shifting under the added weight.

“Yes?” He asks and she grins, dropping her chin onto his shoulder. Tommy can see the officials openly gaping.

“Mom is telling them who you are,” Drista says. “She says she forgot to inform them last time that her son is a Russian assassin.”

Tommy can’t stop the laugh and most of the agents join in immediately. “Forgot, huh?” He asks, between laughs and Drista’s grin widens.

Another man says something and Puffy’s shoulders tense - Dream straightens and it’s all instinct that makes Tommy do the same. It’s only Phil’s grip, and added gentle squeeze, that stops him stepping forward.

“My son-in-law,” Puffy says, loudly, gesturing to George, who awkwardly waves at the attention.

Dream groans. “We’re not married-“

“Yet.” Tommy, Sapnap and Drista interrupt and Dream groans louder, raising his hands to cover his face. Tommy is surprised to see even George with a faint blush high on his cheekbones.

Dream removes his hands to look at Phil, and say, deadpan, “I want to leave.”

“Weak.” Techno coughs.

Wilbur, face blank, pats him on the back. “I think you’re coming down with something.”

Dream narrows his eyes. Tommy bites his cheek to stop himself laughing.

“Is this happening?” Phil calls when Puffy and the officials remain in some sort of standoff. His wings are behind skin, much like Tommy’s, but there’s an aura around him that has the officials swallowing.

It’s a presence that demands attention and a healthy dose of respect.

It’s as if Phil is telling everyone to look at him, to fear him.

“And who might you be?” The man from before asks and Phil grins, tugging at the scar across his eye.

“Philza Minecraft,” he says and Tommy watches as faces are quick to lose colour. “I’m sure you’ve heard of me.”

“I think they’re shitting themselves,” Corpse drawls and its Wilbur’s turn to cough to hide a laugh.

Techno pats his back. “I think you’re catching my cold.”

Dream’s eyes narrow further. Phil hums, amused, lips twitching.

“This is boring,” Minx mutters and Niki sighs before stalking up to Puffy and kissing her on the cheek.

“Oh my god,” Rae whispers.

“Oh shit,” Sapnap hisses.

“Ten on her getting us through the door,” Leslie says and Brooke shakes her hand.

“Fifteen says it takes her using her accent.” Tina adds.

“Twenty says we’ll be in there in a minute,” Sykunno pipes up. When everyone looks at him, he shrugs, smiles like a cherub. “What? It’s Niki.”

In less than forty seconds, Sykunno is richer. Corpse laughs as he hangs back, waiting for Tubbo, Ranboo, Mark, Grey and Ethan, who have yet to show up.

Tommy knows that Tubbo had a brief detour to hopefully hack into a computer. He wanted to follow but with Ranboo there, he knows they’ll both be safe.

Sean doesn’t seem panicked, and Corpse has a smirk to his lips so no one asks.

Well, no one asks until Mark walks in with a camera like he’s vlogging—

Tommy chokes on his own spit.

“Is he filming this?” George asks, cold tone replaced by utter bafflement.

Corpse starts wheezing. “Yep!”

“Oh my fucking god,” Tommy breathes as Tubbo pulls Ranboo - wearing his mask and sunglasses - behind them, happily chatting to the camera. When Tommy raises his eyebrows, Tubbo pulls a flash drive out of his pocket with a wink.

Both Wilbur and Techno dissolve into a coughing fit and Phil sighs, pinching his nose. “Boys,” he shouts and Tubbo’s antenna snap up while Ranboo tries to hopelessly duck behind him. “What did I say about vlogging our visit to the UN?”

“Not to?” Tubbo says with a head tilt and then stares straight at the camera in his face. “Whoops.”

Ethan collapses against Mark as he giggles and Mark’s grin widens. “Alright, everyone, that was Odin, formally known as the Angel of Death—“

Grey hastily powerwalks to Sean’s side. “They dragged me into it,” xe whispers, frantically. “Mark wanted to show his viewers my ability to decay things so they made me decay the door so Tubbo could do Tubbo things.”

Sean chokes as he laughs.

“We used to be subtle,” George murmurs, looking up at the ceiling as if begging for patience, and Sapnap pulls him into a side-hug.

“Georgie? Those days are over. Haven’t you heard? We’re vlogging now.”

“Can you imagine live-vlogging our murders?” Minx muses and Tina snorts.

“Hey, guys!” Brooke starts, in an overly chipper tone. “Coming up: I’m going to murder this politician!”

“They’re never going to let us come back,” Phil says with a sigh. “You’re all feral.”

“Thank you.” Multiple voices chime in and Phil only sighs harder.

“Is it too late to send you back?” Phil asks and Techno and Wilbur can’t hide behind their coughs as they collapse against each other, laughing. Tommy rolls his eyes and leans into Phil’s space.

“You’re stuck with us now, man. Like fucking glue.”

“Gorilla glue,” Mark says. “That’s the strong stuff.”

Tommy points to him and grins at Phil. “Gorilla glue bonds us, Phil.”

Phil follows George and looks up as if he’s asking God why he’s being punished.

“Ah, Tommy, that’s-“ Ranboo starts and Tommy glares at him.

“Shut up, bitch!”

“It was oddly sweet, Tommy,” Niki says and Tommy smiles at her.

“Thank you, Niki.”

“Unfair treatment.” Ranboo mutters. “I’m filling a complaint with HR.”

“Boob boy, I will literally-“

“Tommy,” George mutters and he freezes, turns his head to find the entirety of the UN council looking at them.

Seated in a semi-circle, there’s a singular person sitting behind a desk, their name and country displayed before them on a name plate. Behind them, sits a few other people. To the left of them, a row of chairs, much like those at a theatre, climb up, filled with people.

Behind the US’ representative, Scott Smajor sits, looking extremely uncomfortable and wary. He definitely didn’t expect them then. Grian must’ve kept that quiet.

And there, sitting before them, practically centre stage, is Russia’s representative, because Russia is part of the five permanent members of the UN.

It's a young man, blondish hair and light eyes. There's a cut to one of his eyebrows and he's studying them intently but not purposefully.

Andrey Laptev.

He doesn't know.

He doesn't know who they are or what they're about to do.

Tommy blinks. He definitely is starting to regret his decisions.

"Would you like to introduce yourselves?" The man from before asks Puffy and shoots a look to Phil before nodding.

As if preparing for battle, they all slip into formation. Phil and Puffy stand at the front, with Techno and Wilbur behind them. Tubbo and Ranboo stand behind them, with Niki standing at Puffy's shoulder, Jack beside her, and then the agents stand loosely at the back. Mark, Grey, Sean, Ethan and Corpse awkwardly stand to one side. Tommy is wedged between his brothers and Drista doesn't let go of Dream's neck.

"Captain Puffy," Puffy introduces. "I'm a Hero of L'Manberg. You've seen me, my son and my daughter before with Trigger."

"Where is your other son?" Someone asks and Puffy narrows her eyes at them.

"Dead." She replies, bluntly. The word sounding like a gunshot in the quiet room.

"Philza Minecraft," Phil introduces when the silence has stretched into an uncomfortable territory. "You should all know me as Odin. Or Angel of Death."

Many faces pale. Andrey sits up straighter, eyes now scanning their faces sharply.

"Loki," Wilbur follows on.

"Tyr," Techno says with a head tilt.

"Quackity from Las Nevadas is running late," Phil says. "He should be showing up shortly with Chronos."

("And why do you want to be late?" Quackity asks, after kissing Sapnap goodbye. It's been twenty minutes since they entered the building and Karl refuses to move.

"I have to be sure about something," he replies. "Two minutes."

Quackity sighs, leaning against the building. He should've asked Wilbur if he still has his cigarettes on him. His fingers are itching for one to hold.

Then again, it'd just make Tommy grin at him and wink with both eyes as if he's catching Quackity confessing his undying love.

He's too busy planning how to pickpocket Wilbur - and watching Punz and Purpled be both on duty and playing footsie with each other - he doesn't notice the exact moment Karl's posture changes but he hears him sigh with relief. His head snaps up and Karl is smiling.

"K?"

"Everything is lining up," he says and then frowns. "We might have a problem though."

"Oh? Care to tell?"

"There's no distinct timeline," Karl murmurs. He zones out for a minute before shrugging. "I think I've been involving myself too much."

"Ready to go in?" Quackity says instead of questioning him, waving his hand to get Punz's attention. He's tried. Karl never gives him a straight answer.

"Yep!")

"Why is there someone with a camera here?" The French Representative asks.

"Oh, I'm part of this too!" Mark says with a wave. "I'm Mark!"

"Aren't you the YouTuber?" Someone shouts from the theatre chairs and more voices start to murmur.

"Yeah!" Mark shouts back as Quackity, Karl, Punz and Purpled enter the room, all looking confused by the shouting. "Subscribe to Markiplier!"

"And those behind you?" The UK's representative asks over the new noise of people discussing Mark's presence.

"These are Black Widows and Huntsman Spiders of the Red Room. Including a few experiments from the Beast Labs." Phil says. The sudden fear in many eyes tells Tommy all he needs to know. These people are aware of them, probably aware of what has happened to them. And yet, they chose not to do anything. "For those who are unaware, the Red Room is a program made from Department X, which is a Russian organisation."

Andrey shuffles in his chair, fingers typing rapidly on his laptop.

Tommy wonders where General Dreykov is.

Brooke is the one that answers for him. "The leader of which is right there," she says, pointing to the chairs where a man has slowly started to rise.

Everyone turns.

Tommy can see the moment it occurs to Dreykov that this meeting will be his last one.

Their eyes meet.

Tommy smirks.

“Ah, General!” Wilbur speaks, voice that honeyed tone. “Why don’t you come down here and take a seat?”

It’s not a request and Dreykov is quick to step towards them before sitting beside Andrey, face ashen and eyes wide.

“What’s the meaning of this?” The US representative asks and Scott’s eyes narrow, looking between Phil and Dreykov.

“To set the record straight, mate.” Phil says, evenly. “I’m not really a fan of child soldiers. Are you?”

It’s almost an innocent question, an easy one to answer, if it weren’t for the look in Phil’s eyes, the way his mouth curls around the words. It’s daring and pointed and everyone here knows exactly what he’s implying.

Odin, the leader of the biggest and infamous crime ring in all of America, knows they know.

And he’s asking them to confess their sins or die for their lies.

The US representative flushes. “Of course not!”

Phil smiles. It’s not a nice smile. “Then we’re in agreement.”

The man who spoke to Puffy before, stares at her now with wider eyes. “Your son is a Huntsman Spider?”

Puffy grins, though it looks more like she’s baring her teeth. “You said that with familiarity. Were you aware of what Russia has been doing and, what, chose to do nothing about it?”

Immediately, multiple voices chime in, the loudest being the US, whilst China’s representative looks on with sharp eyes and lips quirked.

“We’ve been aware, yes.” He says to Puffy, speaking over the others, effectively silencing them. “Many countries have spies and agents-“

“Even child ones?” Techno asks, head tilted and he shrugs, seemingly not phased by the collective attention on him.

“No one wants a war,” he says. “Why else do you think we choose to ignore certain... rumours.”

Tommy’s eyes narrow. Politics. It all comes down to politics.

“If that’s the case,” George speaks up and there’s a glint to his eyes, one that speaks of rage so potent it’s turned his veins to ice. Unlike Dream and Sapnap, and even Tommy on most occasions, George doesn’t lash out. He doesn’t like the attention, a true Huntsman Spider, hiding from view. “And you’re okay with ignoring rumours, you won’t mind me telling everyone here about a project your government have been storing away.”

The calm facade of the representative freezes in place as everyone slowly turns to look his way.

“What project?” The US representative spits, face stony.

“Listen-“

“What project-“

“Hey, let’s all-“

Multiple voices starts to chime in and George watches them as the noise level steadily rises before adding, “Or the current President’s thoughts on children.”

Silence.

Stone cold silence.

“I can name over one hundred allegations about British politicians,” Minx says.

“America’s current weaponry trading to terrorist groups,” Corpse speaks, voice quiet but loud in the still room.

“The fuckery that is Russia,” Sean says, arm wrapped tight around Grey’s shoulders.

“But they’re just rumours, right?” Jack says, staring them all down. Surrounding him, much like Phil, is an aura of rage that demands vengeance. “Don’t need to worry about any of that, right?”

Pale faces and quiet gulps.

They know how serious they are.

“What do you want, Odin, Captain?” Scott asks, hands clenching into fists.

“Justice,” Puffy replies. “Hundreds of children are dead and for what? It’s wrong and you all know that but you’re too scared to act.”

“They’re going to tell you their stories,” Phil continues. “And you’re going to go back home and make sure nothing like this ever happens again.”

“Is that a threat?” Someone shouts from the crowd and Techno snorts.

“Yes,” he replies. “It is.”

“Or would you prefer to see what these agents were taught up close and personal?” Wilbur asks.

In the silence, Phil turns to the group. “Ready?” He whispers, hand squeezing the back of Tommy’s neck.

“Fuck no,” he whispers back and then rolls his shoulders.

He has his brothers beside him, his friends and family. He can do this. For his parents, for his blood brother waiting for him back at the orphanage, for Eryn and Hannah and everyone else they lost, for everyone else that can’t tell their own stories because they’re in unmarked graves beneath frozen soil and a blackberry bush.

Tommy steps up, facing the security counsels of most countries and clears his throat.

“I was born to the Red Room,” he starts, “but not as a baby, as a weapon.”

Tommy discusses his own experience. Not the full one, like what he told Phil, Wilbur and Techno, but enough. He talks about training and ballet, about bruises and cuts and endless amounts of suffering, about surgeries and punishments and pain. He also talks about Eret and the woman, about seeing them as family because of the brainwashing.

When his voice dies, Dream steps up. George, adding bits and pieces, is hesitant but in his quiet moments, Sapnap fills them with his own truth.

Dream talks about Puffy, about being sent to kill his family, about killing the other agents who got close. Corpse briefly interrupts to talk about Schlatt. George talks about being older and learning to be cold, to do whatever it took to survive. Sapnap mentions when his flames manifested, how he was close to being killed for being uncontrollable.

Corpse stays quiet, along with Sykunno. But they both mention Toast, mention covert operations. Ethan doesn’t drop Corpse’s hand through the entire thing.

The women step up and talk about their own experiences, about being Widows. They talk about their own training, about learning to be beautiful and silent and quick. They talk about being taught seduction as children, about their male Handlers, about the girls who couldn’t cope with losing not only their minds but bodies.

When they draw to a close, Niki choking out the words when discussing the girl she lost, the best Odette she’s ever seen, Puffy is holding Niki close to her, eyes filled with anger with Jack glaring at the floor and the Syndicate look close to murder.

But they’re not done.

Sean, Mark and Grey talk about the Beast Labs, about how over four hundred people, every time the games went ahead, lost their lives for entertainment. Mark and Grey talk about painful manifestations and Sean explains how scared of him they all were. At the end, Karl

quietly talks about his own experience with Jimmy, Chris and Chandler. Quackity glares at the sea of faces while he talks.

With their stories told, Phil steps forward and talks about Pandora's Vault. He talks about how he supports Sam's decision to work there, knowing he'll keep the prison safe and maintained.

"Those are my terms," he says, to the UN. "Have spies, keep your secrets but don't involve children. If you do, well, it wouldn't be the first time I saw an empire crumble to dust."

"Regimes fall everyday," George says, looking directly at General Dreykov. "We tend not to weep over that. We're Russian."

General Dreykov raises his eyebrows but says nothing.

"So what now?" The man who spoke to Puffy asks.

"Now, we leave." Puffy says with a shrug. "We only came to speak to you--"

"The Russian suicides are you, aren't they?" Andrey asks and they all stare back at him. It's a stupid question considering what they've all just said. "What about us?"

"You can go back to pretending we don't exist," Dream says. "Unless you helped facilitate Department X?"

Andrey blinks and shakes his head. Phil smiles at him. "Then you're all good, mate!"

"You can't expect the UN to let you leave after they know you plan to kill every lasting member of the Department," General Dreykov finally speaks up and Wilbur laughs. It's an oddly melodic sound that has multiple people tensing.

"You mean like how they ignored the assassin program?" Wilbur asks, head tilted. "They don't want war, remember General? And fighting us will be more than a little battle."

"The only universal language is violence," Techno adds. "It wouldn't be the first government any of us have destroyed."

Murmurings start up and Scott turns to them. "You had no hand in killing my agents?"

Niki shakes her head. "If we did, it was under Madame's orders."

"I told you he was hiding something from us," Wilbur hisses and Scott rolls his eyes.

"Being friendly with what's shaping up to be a terrorist organisation isn't in my job description," he says. He looks to Phil and nods. "I apologise for not contacting you when I first heard what was happening."

Phil hums. "Sure, mate. Unless you're hiding something else?"

Scott smiles at him, unassuming and easy. Phil chuckles. "I have no intentions to fight the Syndicate," Scott reiterates. "But please for the love of my sanity don't harass the president again."

"No promises," Techno mutters under his breath, darkly and Wilbur starts coughing.

"I think I'm catching something," he says when Scott turns to him.

The man from before stands and the whole room is immediately silenced. He looks first at Phil and then at Puffy.

"The UN will discuss this further but you may leave," he says and Phil grins.

They step away when Dreykov starts to laugh. "Are you stupid?" He spits. "Letting them go that easily?"

"General-" The US representative starts but Dreykov doesn't stop.

He stands before them and says, "You and the world, you have your soldiers, your secret weapons... but we Russians, we have nothing but our winter."

All of the agents tense, minds burning. The last sentence has to be a trigger of some kind, even if Tommy can't remember where he originally heard it.

Tommy has a second of pure panic flooding his veins.

If anyone of them lose it, a lot of people could die. Tommy has the ability to kill reapers and he knows taking out the leaders of the Syndicate would give Dreykov the power he needs to replenish the dying Department.

But he has no need to panic.

There's only a second of fear and then the hair on the back of his neck rises.

Tommy immediately throws himself to the ground, grabbing Tubbo and Ranboo and pulling them down with him.

The glass of the window cracks.

General Dreykov's eyes widen. His body sways and then crumbles.

"Sniper!" Someone from the UN screams but Tommy doesn't pay attention to any of the yells or hasty retreats under tables. He follows where the bullet pierced the glass out to the opposite building.

He thanks his avian nature for honing in on a familiar head of reddish brown hair. In a split second, Niko Constantin disappears from sight.

Tommy can't help but laugh.

“Tommy?” Sappnap asks and Tommy grins at him.

“Constantin still has a fucking grudge.”

In the wake of sirens and ambulances, they all leave with relative ease and Corpse, in the chaos, taps multiple people. No one looks at them any further, maybe because of how easily it was for an outsider to assassinate someone within their ranks.

Only when Leslie goes to open a portal back to L’Manberg, Phil shakes his head. He looks at his phone and Karl says for him, “Washington D.C..”

(Following Callahan’s instructions, Alyssa finds him in Devon. He’s guarded the minute she sits beside him in the park.

“I’m done, remember?” He says and she smiles.

“So are they,” she replies. “The entire organisation is crumbling because of them.”

“Why are you here then?” He asks.

“Your Handler is still alive,” she says and watches the way he tenses. “I’m sure they could find a way to kill him without you but considering your ability-“

“Where?” He interrupts and she turns to Callahan, standing at the edge of the park, looking at the ducks in the pond.

“Cal says Washington D.C., an apartment near where they’re rebuilding S.H.I.E.L.D..”

He runs a ringed finger through black hair and nods. “I’ll be there.”)

(Sitting in Scott’s office, a man in a green striped suit doesn’t notice when his ability starts to dull. To him, it feels like he’s safe. There is no buzzing of fear, no desire to run.

He doesn’t realise when his danger sense fades at the edges.)

Phil rolls his eyes, pocketing to the phone. “You saw?”

Karl’s smile widens. “Cleaning house, right? Alyssa told me Callahan saw him there.”

Dream perks up, Drista still clinging to his back. “Alyssa and Callahan? What did you two want with them anyway?”

“You’ll see!” Karl says, skipping through Leslie’s portal. “Technically we don’t all need to be there but that’s fine.”

Tommy shares a look with George as Sapnap and Quackity are quick to step through.

“Fuck it,” Sean says, dragging Grey through with him.

“I second that,” Jack says, gripping Niki’s hand to pull her along.

Tommy rolls his eyes and follows, only to freeze at the sight of the Triskelion ruins. A new building is being built while the damage is removed.

George stumbles into Dream’s side and Tommy turns to see Phil walk away from the portal to say something to Scott as he leaves the UN doors.

(“What now?” Scott asks, tiredly when he sees Phil approach.

“You have a man working for you,” Phil tells him. “Blond hair, grey eyes, likes green. Ring any bells, mate? It’s okay if it doesn’t but I just wanted you to know you need to start planning a funeral.”

Scott stares at him. He knows exactly who Phil is going after. “He was the one who told me about the Department infiltrating S.H.I.E.L.D..” He explains. “I’d like to keep him alive.”

Phil’s smile turns sharp and dangerous and bloodthirsty. “He was my son’s Handler,” he says like a coo and Scott tenses. “He’s dying. Would you like to join him by trying to stop me?”

Scott has faced down many enemies: terrorists, serial killers, assassins. There is something extremely unnerving about Phil, something otherworldly. It makes the primal part of his brain want to run and beg and hide.

Scott shakes his head. He didn’t know that and while he always assumed his informant told him about the Department for a reason, he never knew it was because he was running from them, trying to start a new life. Phil nods and steps away.

Only when he’s gone can Scott breathe again.)

He watches as Scott tenses and then shakes his head. Tommy frowns, as Phil walks away with Scott staring at his back.

“Hey, big man,” Tommy says when the portal closes. “What the fuck are we doing here?”

“If you want to leave, Toms,” Wilbur says in response. “Tell us and we’ll go for a walk.”

Tommy’s frown deepens. “What the fuck-“

“Thirty seconds,” Karl murmurs.

(Spifey watches a portal open up. He watches as agents he knows step out.

He dials a number Alyssa gave him and says, “Your parcel is ready to be picked up.”

“Parcel?” His old Handler asks.

“Courtesy of Scott.” He rattles off an address and then puts the phone down.

A minute later, he spots his Handler leave his apartment and smiles, knowing he’s about to die a very horrific death. He may have run from the Room like they did, but he didn’t run far enough.)

Phil’s shoulders roll. His wings rip from his skin and span wide. Techno waves his hand and the crowd parts, pulled by their blood to the side. Wilbur starts whistling a tune.

Tommy opens his mouth to demand answers when he sees him.

Blond hair. Green suit. Polished shoes.

Immediately his brothers slip in front of him, hiding him from view as Sean and Sykunno block Corpse as Ethan’s eyes widen.

“Mr. Cicle?” He hisses and Corpse, despite his sudden stillness, pulls Ethan behind him. Tommy tilts his head to spy around Dream and Drista’s heads.

At the sound of his name, Mr. Cicle looks up and freezes. His eyes widen behind his glasses. He looks seconds away from bolting.

“Don’t run,” Wilbur says in a honeyed tone and Mr. Cicle’s hands shake before he places them in his pockets.

“Now then,” he starts and Tommy’s breath catches at the sound of his voice. “Let’s not be hasty.”

“I don’t even need to induce any fear,” Techno says. “You’re drowning in it.”

“You’re Mr. Cicle, right?” Phil checks. “I’d hate to murder an innocent man.”

Mr. Cicle frowns. Tommy’s stomach twists at the sight. “Listen, I don’t know what you’ve been told but I’m not whoever you’re after.”

“Liar,” Sappnap hisses. “You sent us on that mission to kill Dreykov’s daughter.”

“Life is about choices,” he says. “You didn’t have to kill a little girl. That’s on you-“

Sappnap steps forward, hands flaming but Karl grabs him. “This isn’t yours,” he whispers, looking at Tommy, at Corpse, who share a look.

It's almost like he's staring at Eret when looking at his past Handler. Thinking of killing him makes him shudder.

Mr. Cicle was nice.

"See?" He says, smiling at Tommy and Tommy hates the way he smiles instinctively in response. "You don't want me to die, do you, Theseus?"

Tommy wants to tell him that he wants him dead and gone and buried.

But the words won't come.

They sit in his throat and he nearly chokes on them.

Because Mr. Cicle was nice. In a place dubbed Hell, where pain was expected and worn like a badge of honour, Tommy had a Handler who would praise him, who would ruffle his hair and smile at him.

Just looking at him now, Tommy can draw on multiple memories - reality or fiction? A boy desperate for love even at the cost of his soul - of Mr. Cicle greeting him after a mission. Of gentle hands checking his wounds. Of a pat to his head, a nudge to his shoulder.

Tommy meets his eyes, swallows and looks away. He shuffles back behind Dream, behind Drista, a hand reaching out to grip George's shirt.

"See?" Mr. Cicle repeats. "Theseus knows--"

"That you're a psychopath," Corpse interrupts, eyes narrowed and voice rumbling from his throat in a growl.

"Hey now," he says but Corpse shakes his head.

"I knew you longer than Tommy--" Corpse emphasises his name with a snarl, "-did and I haven't forgotten what you made me do. You were so fucking nice. That's how it worked, right? Everyone else in that fucking hellhole was cruel but you were so kind."

"I don't see how being kind is a problem," Mr. Cicle says with a nervous laugh.

"We all wanted you as our Handler," Sykunno says.

"Until we found out what you were like," Tina hisses and Corpse looks angrier than Tommy has ever seen him.

"You made us kill kids. With that fucking Cheshire smile of yours." Corpse spits. "You didn't beat us but you watched us be tortured. Told us it was to make us stronger. I spent months in the isolation chamber because of you. I did- I did fucking unquestionable things all because I couldn't say no to you."

Corpse's hands tighten into fists and Tommy knows he's dangerous. They're all dangerous. They were created to be scary and intimidating. But Corpse is quiet and doesn't like

attention. He lingers in the shadows, more than happy to let other people speak over him.

Tommy forgot he was trained by Madame like George was.

Tommy forgot Corpse is like a Widow, everything true hidden by a mask of solitude.

“You told me, after Ethan died, that with my distraction gone, I could finally live up to my potential.” Corpse’s voice raises. “You had my friend, my only friend, killed and you told me to be fucking happy!”

“I did what I had to,” Mr. Cicle shouts. “I was the generation after Niko Constantin. I was homeless and they promised me protection, a warm meal, a roof over my head. Then he lost it and they scrapped the Wolf Spider program. They kicked us out! I was fighting to survive!”

Corpse wordlessly snarls and Sean’s gaze is borderline crazed.

“You’re pissed they didn’t let you kill people that you came back to torture kids?” Tommy says, quietly but they all hear.

He knows they do because Mr. Cicle freezes, like a deer in headlights.

Tommy lifts his head, meets his eyes. “Just because you’ve been abused and fucked over, doesn’t give you the right to hurt other people. Instead of stopping the people that hurt you, you helped them.”

Tommy heard when he was a recruit that the woman had personally chosen Eret to take over the Room. He heard rumours about a child finding a mother and coming in from the cold.

After Corpse shot them, he told all of them that it was true. That in Eret’s memories, they remember the woman as a kind mother, protecting them, raising them, making them powerful and strong.

Eret was moulded just like they were.

The agents became weapons and Eret became a leader.

An army fit for a king.

But that doesn’t make what Eret did right. They perpetuated the violence as much as the Handlers did, as the guards. Eret was trapped like they were but they didn’t need to be cruel.

Mr. Cicle is the same. He could’ve ran when he had the chance. Yet he stayed. He never raised his hand to Tommy but he made it so Tommy couldn’t leave, he helped make him a killer.

All of the agents had their own rebellions, ways to fight against what they were living through. Just like how Tommy’s brothers pulled their punches with him.

But Eret and the woman and Mr. Cicle and the guards and the Handlers benefitted from the agents pain.

Tommy looks at his past Handler and feels something in him crack and burn to ashes. He doesn't owe this man anything. Not now. Not ever. Never again.

"Dad," Tommy says and Phil's head snaps around to look at him. "I don't care what you do to him but I want to go home."

A soft chirp, a gentle hand on his shoulder. Tommy instinctively leans closer, his own chirp responding.

"Of course, mate."

"Come on, bossman," Tubbo says, bouncing over to Tommy's side, wings fluttering. Ranboo follows behind. They both look angry but when their eyes meet Tommy's, their expressions soften. "I still need to beat you at Uno."

"I'm in," Purpled jumps in and Ranboo groans.

"But then you'll win."

"You've got to get better at cards, boob boy," Tommy murmurs, stepping through Leslie's portal.

They end up outside of the Syndicate's base. Puffy and Drista also step through along with Punz. Charlie greets them at the door.

"Hey!" He shouts. "How'd the meeting go?"

"We're probably a terrorist organisation now," Tubbo replies with a grin and Charlie fist bumps the sky.

"Nice!"

"Want a ride back to Las Nevadas?" Puffy asks. "I've got to sort out the paperwork and start reaching out to other Hero organisations."

Charlie shakes his head. "I'm staying with the new terrorists but thanks!"

Puffy laughs as she leaves, Drista giggling at her side. Tommy goes inside, to his nest, surrounded by his friends and plays cards, ignoring his warring emotions over his Handler.

(Phil doesn't delight in causing pain. He prefers to get the job done as quickly and efficiently as possible.

But seeing Wilbur and Techno toy with Tommy's Handler while the agents watch - Quackity is grinning a vicious smile, Karl curled up next to Sapnap, curious but indifferent to the screams - each of them with sharp smiles leaves him feeling satisfied.

"You feel like you're being stabbed," Wilbur whispers as Techno pulls and pushes his blood.

By the end of it, Mr. Cicle is curled on the stone beneath him, blood pooling from his nose, his ears, his eyes. He's sobbing, choking on his own blood.

Phil walks closer, letting his wings span wide. He crouches down, hand outstretched.

"All this," Mr. Cicle hisses through bloodied lips, "for one boy?"

"All this for my son," Phil says and touches him.

His soul is pulled from his body and Jack hollers, seeing the way his soul is ripped from inside of him.

"For you, love," Phil continues and Kristin appears before him, a matching satisfied grin on her lips.

She takes the soul and kisses him on the cheek.)

Less than a week passes before it's in the news. Mark's viewers assumed it was an arg or a film set, but the minute the news breaks, it's chaos on his channel and Twitter.

The UN expresses their apologies publicly and explains their plans for the future, such as ensuring no facilities in any country employ child soldiers. They also include a list of other crimes they're going to punish.

A majority are concerned, confused by the sudden action, surprised they're quickly acting.

Tommy and his family know why.

And if Tommy hears about a certain faction within the UN unwilling to bend? Well, just because he wants to learn how to bake, doesn't mean he's put the gun down.

Which is how Tommy ends up standing outside of a secret conference. He steps out of the portal and presses his hand to the wall. Immediately he can feel the electricity thrumming under his skin and he mentally thinks of the playlist Wilbur made for him.

"For when you want to be fabulous committing murder," he'd said with a laugh.

He faintly hears Staying Alive start to play and he grins. He's dressed in his classic Huntsman gear but he wants to make a statement out of this.

He wants to leave a message: Syndicate style.

The Red Room were always subtle but the Syndicate, as of late, don't need to hide. Everyone knows them. Everyone fears them.

Tommy likes that point.

So he looks around until he spots it and grins. Perfect.

There, on the wall, is a fire axe. Tommy reaches with careful fingers and grabs it, tests it weight. Perfectly balanced, as all things should be.

Istanbul (Not Constantinople) filters through and Tommy's grin widens.

He stalks forward and slaps the double doors open.

Ten heads swivel to him.

"Hi," Tommy greets. "Who's ready to meet Death?"

With that, he starts swinging.

Half-way through, Don't Stop Me Now comes on. It sounds even better with screams and gurgling.

When Tommy steps back through the portal, he's drenched in blood and the axe is thrown over his shoulder. It joins his collection of weaponry.

There aren't anymore covert groups that try to meet after that and Tommy can sleep, knowing the Department is nothing but a story.

Chapter End Notes

And now, healing <3

Chapter 37

Chapter Notes

Hello lads.

These are basically a bunch of healing snapshots shoved together ;)

For the Eurovision songs:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6BQXxnYbrp2srJ75NnznAv?si=tpOY17luR9eKIsuHI6g9sg>

For Mika's Happy Ending song:

<https://open.spotify.com/track/0TzbmXnYrIMV6dEln2l9nb?si=xgZOivs0QPqiRNGeXDH4kg>

TW// past brainwashing, past child abuse, mention of past child death, mental health discussions, weaponry, brief mentions of violence, swearing

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy doesn't move on. Not really. The Department crashing and burning is amazing news but it doesn't change what they went through. It may have ended but it will live with them forever.

But Tommy doesn't let it keep him from living.

He doesn't have to survive anymore.

So he lives.

And he learns.

Niki, when he explains his plan of helping out at her bakery, is ecstatic. She teaches him slowly, carefully. He eats most of his own creations and switches some ingredients around.

He goes to the ballet studio, joins Ethan and Corpse, Rae and Tina. Some days, he finds Purpled there, or Tubbo and Ranboo, sometimes even Techno or Wilbur. They always moan about it at the end, about the way their feet hurt and their ankles ache and their calves are burning. Tommy laughs at their pain, finding the memories of dancing until he bled doesn't hurt as much.

Not when he's with family.

He sits by Tubbo when he hacks. He spars with Ranboo and watches as Dream and Techno's fights become more and more skilled and dangerous.

Some days, he sits with Phil, or follows him to meetings. Within a month, Odin is a name hushed between criminals, name drenched in fear and respect. The Red Room becomes a house on fire: anyone with connections to it are quickly killed or handed over to Phil.

Tommy thinks within a year, or two, the Red Room will be nothing but a past memory, a fleeting stain in Russian history.

Not that they'll ever be mentioned.

No one within the government has tried to stop the Syndicate or speak about it. Maybe they know trying to hose down the flames is futile. Maybe they don't want to be dragged in and burnt. Maybe they're worried about the public finding out they're the ones who built the house with faulty wiring.

When Tommy wants to get away, he finds comfort in his brothers. Some nights he needs to be near them. Some nights he needs to know they're safe and alive and well. Even if that means Sapnap's snoring and George's cold feet and Dream kicking him in his sleep.

That's why he spends some nights at the orphanage.

At the start, talking and being near Shroud (and Hive, a semi-permanent figure at his side) is extremely awkward. Neither of them want to risk what they've yet to grow and so the conversations are stilted, slow. It's like walking on eggshells.

Tommy doesn't feel bad about it though. He sees the way Niki and Ranboo dance around each other, the way Tubbo and Michael spend most of their time colouring together.

Tommy, of course, is the one that eventually breaks the tension between them. Simply by being Tommy.

"Okay," he says, when the sun is out and a lot of the children are tagging each other on the lawn. "Fuck this. I'm not watching another shitty American--"

"Hey!" Ranboo shouts over from where he's sitting with Tubbo and Michael.

"-show. Fight me," Tommy continues, ignoring Ranboo in favour of staring at Shroud.

The boy raises his eyebrows. "Fight you?" He asks, dubiously.

"Yep! I'm fucking bored and I feel like if you punch me, you'll get over this uptight attitude you've got."

Shroud stares at him. "For that comment alone," he says, calmly, "I definitely want to punch you."

"Amazing, let's go!"

Tommy keeps it light, makes sure that Shroud knows there's no heat about this. He can walk away if he wants.

So the first few hits are easily dodged. They're both testing the water, both getting a feel for each other.

Within minutes, they're fighting like they're dancing. It's easy, there's a fluidity about it. Shroud isn't as experienced but he would be approaching his graduation in a few years. He can fight.

And Tommy and him fight the same. Before Tommy was mentored under his brothers, he fought exactly like Shroud did.

So in the grass, hands curled into fists, trading kicks and blows and jabs, they learn each other.

This is Theseus, a Huntsman Spider from the Red Room. Twenty-eight to one, twenty-eight to two survivors.

This is Shroud, recruit of the Red Room Program, and potential brimming under the surface.

This is Tommy, a teenager who only wants to live.

This is Shroud, a boy who only wants to be.

This is two brothers, defined by their blood but overcoming it, showing the world they can exist as their own person.

And when they lay panting in the grass, Shroud laughs for what seems to be the first time. Hive, from the sidelines, grins a grotesque smile filled with spiders, and Tommy breathes.

"So," Wilbur says, dropping down in a chair opposite Phil. "Is Grian becoming a syndicate member?"

"Or our new brother?" Techno asks, following behind and leaning over the back of the chair to stare at Phil with his red eyes.

Phil rolls his eyes. "Yes to the first, I have no idea to the second. We have a spare room if he needs it--"

His sons share a look. Phil sighs.

"Yes?" He asks.

"What about the other Hermits?"

"Puffy's problem," Phil says, looking back to his laptop briefly when another email comes through. "They're not as grey as Grian is. Puffy is thinking of running less of a Hero Tower

and more a vigilante group.”

“Niki’s going to love that.” Wilbur grins. “Tommy, too. Jack has also mentioned hunting down a few unsavoury people.”

Phil shrugs. “If the Hermits want to involve themselves, I’m not going to stop them. But Grian is with us.”

They share another look.

“Can’t believe we have two avian brothers,” Techno says and Wilbur laughs.

Phil once again sighs but he can’t stop the smile on his face. His boys. His sons.

When Tommy feels more settled in his skin, he asks to go to England. A specific place in Nottingham. A specific road and a specific house.

Phil immediately agrees and they go as a mismatched family. Tommy knows they don’t understand and that’s fine. He’s more than happy to show them.

Nestled near the trees, Tommy points them to the modern house. Brick walls and big windows, a single garage. Tommy finds the door unlocked and steps inside.

It’s just like how they left it: white walls, a large living room, a conservatory that shows a tidy garden. Beyond the fence, Tommy knows Sherwood Forest sits.

“This is where baby me lived,” Tommy says, quietly.

All eyes are quick to sharpen, their intrigue peaked.

“I was born to the Room,” he says. “But I was free once, thanks to my mum and dad, and I’m free again. I thought- I thought-“ Tommy takes a shuddering breath. “In the Room, we didn’t have family or friends or a home. We were spiders, we had webs and we had prey and that was it.” He lifts his head, gestures to them without looking at them. “Then I met you fuckers and I guess I have all of them, don’t I?”

Techno’s hand drops to his shoulder. Wilbur grins at him. Phil ruffles his hair. Tubbo and Ranboo press themselves to the glass to see the garden. Dream is leaning back against the wall. George is watching Tommy. Sapnap is touching everything within reach. Niki is smiling and Jack is bouncing through the rooms.

Tommy may be able to go wherever he wants but this will never be his home. But then again, he doesn’t need it to be. He’s found a new place to be from.

Russia may be where he grew up but these people are his home.

“Yes,” Phil says, voice drowning in affection. “You do.”

Wilbur is the one to mention it. “Hey,” he says. “I’ve improved.”

Tommy blinks the sleep from his eyes as Phil cards his fingers through Tommy’s wings. The preening session has Tommy drifting away and he’s only happy to do this knowing he’s safe, surrounded by people who will protect him.

“What?” He slurs, the softness clinging to him.

“Laser tag,” Wilbur says, jutting his chin out, looking confident. “I’ve improved.”

Tommy blinks. “Fucking how?” He asks and shuffles, unwilling to let Phil stop but also wanting to be more coherent. “No time?”

“You say I’ve had no time but where do you think I go when I need space?” Wilbur asks and Tommy continues to blink at him.

“Fucking crazy,” Tommy mutters and then shifts.

Phil removes his hands and Tommy sits up, fluffing his wings. He shakes out his feathers and then looks to Wilbur.

“Want a rematch?” Tommy asks, still a little confused from the sleep gripping tight to him.

Wilbur pushes up his glasses. The smirk that pulls on his lips is slow and deadly. “Absolutely but I want to even my odds.”

Tommy’s head tilts. “How?”

“Well I thought about trying to bribe George,” Wilbur says and Tommy snorts. “But, let’s keep it a Syndicate affair. I want Ranboo.”

Tommy lifts his eyebrows. It’s a good play considering Ranboo will be able to learn on the job. “Sure, I’ll take Tubbo.”

“Not Techno?” Wilbur asks, brow furrowed and Tommy shrugs.

“I’m trying to be nice but if you want me to also-“

“Nope, he’s mine.” Wilbur jumps in and Tommy rolls his eyes.

“Cool, I’ll take Phil. Then we’re even.”

Which is how the Syndicate ends up getting kitted out for laser tag. Tommy feels the familiar weight of a gun in his hands and smiles at Wilbur.

“You can go first,” he says and it’s only then that Wilbur pauses, looking at him, eyes narrowed.

“Why do I feel like you’re planning something?”

Tommy makes sure to exaggerate his innocent face. He widens his eyes and pouts. “No idea what you’re talking about Big Dubs,” he says and laughs when Wilbur’s squints at him.

Tommy watches them disappear and then turns to Phil and Tubbo. They’re both grinning at him.

“You have a plan then?” Tubbo asks and Tommy nods and starts to speak.

When the timer buzzes, Tommy steps through. Tubbo immediately flies up to the rafters, perching atop a section of wall. Phil, Tommy’s wild card, walks through like a man on a mission.

And thus the games begin.

In seconds, Tommy finds Techno and shoots before sprinting away. He can hear Wilbur calling out to Phil but most of his senses are waiting for the panther in the grass.

Sure enough, after shooting and dodging Techno a couple of times, the hair on the back of Tommy’s neck stands up. He ducks and turns, firing and hears the buzz of electricity.

“Oh, Boob-boy,” he calls out and laughs when he notices Ranboo’s movements.

Sure, he’s better at sensing people considering one of his abilities is to feel them out, but he’s also trained for this. And it’s oddly freeing to use his training for something fun and not deadly.

These aren’t real bullets. No one is getting hurt. He can walk away from this without punishment or fear.

But Tommy is a Huntsman after all.

He’s competitive to his core.

And as much as he respects and, admittedly, loves his family, he’s not too fond of losing.

So for the time remaining, Tommy shoots and sometimes he misses - part of him hates that, waits for the strike of displeasure, but a bigger part is overjoyed that he can do this without getting hurt for it, a miss is just a miss - and doesn’t get hit once. His training refuses to give when it comes to his own survival.

When they walk out, Wilbur is staring at him. “What the fuck?”

Tommy grins, seeing their totals add up. They won by a long shot.

“Tubbo hid and Phil drew your fire,” Tommy says easily. “I focused on Ranboo because... Ranboo.”

“That’s fair,” Ranboo mutters.

Wilbur blinks and then a dangerous look flickers across his face. “I will beat you one day.”

Techno pats him on the shoulder. “Your training arc is still lacking.”

Wilbur whirls on him. “Hey! You’re the one mentoring the kid and not me!”

“That’s because he has potential,” Techno snorts and jumps back when Wilbur lunges for him.

Tubbo flutters over to Tommy and grabs Ranboo’s hand. “Wow,” he says as they all watch them scrap. Wilbur ends up with Techno in a headlock before he’s quickly flipped. “They’re insane.”

“Boys,” Phil sighs but there’s a small smile to his lips.

Tommy leans against Tubbo and feels his body relax. This is a family. This is his family. And he wouldn’t change them for the world.

Tommy may not want to kill anymore, but he still has skills he can use and he’d rather not lose his exercise regime. Just because he’s not focused on being a Huntsman Spider doesn’t mean he can forget it.

So when he can’t sleep, or when he needs to let out the Huntsman, he goes to find Niki.

Theseus and Nemesis, spending their nights cleaning up L’Manberg’s streets. Sometimes they’re joined by Captain Puffy. Sometimes it’s a Syndicate member. Sometimes it’s an agent, needing to blow off steam.

Either way, despite the Hero Tower practically out of order, L’Manberg has very few crimes.

Maybe because, depending on the crime, those criminals don’t make it to sunrise, let alone able to commit more crime.

Phil doesn’t speak to Scott much. He knows he’s there, watching over L’Manberg, but he doesn’t involve himself.

Even when Grian ends up spending more time in Phil’s spare room than in Washington D.C.. Scar is also a regular, popping in to talk to Tubbo about hacking before disappearing. Gemini, Doc and Ren only show up to speak to Puffy about whether she’d like to kickstart the Hero Commission again. They seem dejected when she disagrees and decides to stick to freelance work.

Not that she needs to money. Not when Dream has his hands in Swiss bank accounts.

“What?” Tommy had said when Phil asked about how they all had so much money. “It’s not like our dead Handlers and those corrupt billionaires are going to miss a couple thousand going missing.”

He knows S.H.I.E.L.D. are scared of him, of them all. He knows he's feared in most countries now that he's proudly showing his face and wings and scars.

It pains him, knowing he's not the only one stuck with an injury. Wilbur and his sewing marks around his lips, Techno's hands, Tubbo's finger.

This is the life he chose for them, one he hoped they could escape.

But their scars prove they lived through their hell and organisations like S.H.I.E.L.D. know better than to mess with him again. The consequences of their actions are splashed across the news: Pandora's Vault reform, Russia being extremely quiet.

So Phil doesn't mind Grian staying with them.

He does, however, mind when he has to involve himself in other people's troubles.

A small-time gang made up of ex-S.H.I.E.L.D. agents thinking they can start something to get back in S.H.I.E.L.D.'s favour after Scott fired them for their ties to organised crime. A small-time gang on Phil's turf. A small-time gang that got shot down by George, hiding somewhere up on a rooftop.

A shot to a knee, to an ankle, to a shin.

Dream is lurking behind Phil, eyes narrowed looking at the men. Minx is standing by the building, flipping a knife over and over again.

"Do I want to know why you're following me?" Phil asks and Dream rolls his eyes.

"Your bodyguards are busy," Minx calls.

"And you have the potential to be a trouble magnet like Theseus is," Dream adds, with a shrug.

Which translates to: they're not letting anything happen to Phil while Tommy is away causing mischief and mayhem.

Phil sighs, turns back to the men. "Did you have a plan or was blindingly rushing me it?" He asks and one of them snarls at him. The leader then.

"You're dangerous," he spits and Phil smiles.

"Thank you."

The man wordlessly snarls again. "It's worse now you have them!"

Phil raises his eyebrows. "Oh?" He breathes. "So you're aware of who they are? Interesting, mate. Very interesting."

If they're not writhing from being shot, they're glaring at him. Phil's smile widens.

“You know,” he says, calmly. “If you didn’t know who they were, I was going to let you go.”

“Seriously?” Minx asks and Phil laughs at her.

“This isn’t the first time I’ve had a hit on me,” he says. “I rate them depending on how close they get.”

Minx starts cackling and even Dream has to turn away to contain his wheeze. Phil’s smile becomes more genuine before focusing back on the men at his feet.

“You got pretty close but I can’t let you go now.”

Knowing about the Black Widows and Huntsman Spiders isn’t a crime but knowing their faces? Phil won’t risk them, risk his family.

He cracks his knuckles and steps closer. Faces immediately grow pale.

“How did you break them?” The leader snaps. “How did you invoke such loyalty?”

He’s probably expecting Phil to have their trigger words, or to have some type of blackmail on them. People rarely expect the easiest answer to be the right one.

After all, Phil saw a group of damaged and dangerous assassins and welcomed them in without any hassle. He saw a boy on a roof, who shot him, and accepted him in as a son.

“By being kind, mate.” He says, before reaching out and taking their lives, handing them of to his wife with a smile.

“Where have you two been?” Phil asks later when Techno and Wilbur walk in, grins splashed across their faces. They share a look at the question and shrug.

“No where,” Wilbur says.

“Around,” Techno drawls.

Phil hums, eyebrows raised. “That’s funny considering the national emergency happening in France.”

(Screams and yells as a building collapses.

People in balaclavas crumble to their knees as their blood rushes from their brains.

Police cars swerve on the road, a lone voice telling them in a honeyed tone to walk away.)

Both of them freeze.

“We-“ Wilbur starts, looking like a cornered animal. “We don’t know anything about that.”

Phil hums again and then slowly turns his head to where Tubbo is sitting between Tommy and Ranboo at the dining table. At the attention, Tubbo drops his gaze to the table, fiddling with his fork. Ranboo’s shoulder draw up to his ears as he shifts uneasily in his seat. Tommy doesn’t even blink.

“And the nuke threats about Italy? Any takers?”

Ranboo remains silent. Tubbo clears his throat. “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

(Quick typing rings out in the quiet room as across the world, officials run around, desperately trying to stop the flashing lights warning them of an imminent threat.

One line of code and shouts of alarm start up as missiles become prepared for launch.)

Phil then turns to Tommy, who meets his gaze unflinchingly. “What about the shitstorm in Croatia?”

Tommy smiles at him. “I heard about that. The train accident. And that castle got shot up, right? There are fucking crazy people out there, Phil.”

(One figure runs atop the moving train, dodging kicks and slashes of a knife from a man covered in tattoos.

Two cars race beside the moving train, before one figure starts shouting, and rolls down the window to send a fireball at the other vehicle.)

Phil stares at him a moment longer and then rolls his eyes. “Yeah, real crazy people.” He then looks over all of them. “I’d like to remind you all that being in the Syndicate is supposed to be a quiet thing.”

“You threatened the President of America outside of the White House!” Tommy shouts. “How the fuck is that quiet?”

“I’m pretty sure every criminal gang knows who you are and are terrified of you,” Ranboo adds, still not meeting anyones eyes.

Phil grins. “Good.” He stands and looks to Tommy. “I’m the Boss, I get to be loud.”

“How is that fucking fair?”

“Stop blowing up governments and people you don’t like!”

“Italy deserved it!”

On a private section of beach in Crete, a man with reddish brown hair rests atop a bright pink beach towel in the sand. The heat is warm, not stifling, but he can feel a part of himself start to melt.

The cold of Siberia, the ice he had to build inside of him to stay alive, cannot fight against this sun.

Despite his relaxed state, part of his mind is still focused on his surroundings. The lapping of waves on the shore, the shouting of teenagers playing volleyball further up the beach, the taste of beer on his tongue.

Niko knows he will never escape being a Wolf Spider but he can come in from the cold. He can experience what he missed from his time locked away. He can start to live.

And if, when he’s out, he sees familiar faces in the crowd, he will hang back but watch. Just to be sure they don’t need help.

And if, maybe, if he sees those familiar faces looking like they need help, he might step in and make a scene. Wolf Spiders are so violent after all.

But for now, with his face in the sun, Niko relaxes. The world can come later. He can finally put himself first.

Alexander’s business is running smoothly as usual. The whispers have silenced. In fact, most of the Russian government has fallen suspiciously quiet.

Not that he minds it.

He has a wife and a daughter.

His days are long but his nights are spent with the two people he cares about the most. Russia is cold but he is warm.

That’s all that matters.

Tommy and Shroud, now with common ground, spend days together at the orphanage. Tubbo usually follows to see Michael. They’re a lot more quiet than Tommt and Shroud, who seem to share the same loud gene, but Michael clings to Tubbo. There is no hesitation in his affection.

Sometimes, they go to the ballet studio.

There, Niki and Ranboo dance together. Ranboo has picked up ballet as easily as breathing. He's not a Huntsman though. His movements are stiff, a little unsure. He'll learn to be fluid or he won't. Some people simply can't dance.

At the ballet studio, Tommy dances to be free, to reclaim what was taken from him. He was made to dance until he dropped but now, he can dance because he wants to.

Shroud, like any little brother, dances to prove he's better than Tommy. Hive watches the whole affair and his lips twitch. He may not be able to speak but those quick smiles tell Tommy everything.

Their relationships are fragile, as thin as a spider's silk.

They don't know each other's limits or boundaries, how to really act around each other. Niki overcompensates by plying Ranboo with food. Tommy is too loud. Tubbo doesn't say anything when Michael refuses to let go.

Spider's silk may be thin but it's strong and soon enough, they'll be able to interact like normal siblings.

Tommy doesn't know why he ends up back on their couch, watching Eurovision but he is. A year has passed. He finds that thought to be crazy.

He's unsurprised to learn that they all want him to translate but knowing he's useful, knowing they want him here, is a soothing thought, a comforting one.

It starts off strong with the Flag Parade. Techno is commenting on the different colours. Wilbur grins when Mika shows up. Tubbo and Ranboo are quick to guess who they're going to like based just on their outfit. Phil sits back with a smile on his lips, sipping his beer.

Tommy likes Portugal's witch coven, soft vibes. Techno and Ranboo start headbanging to Finland.

"Yeah, Tommy," Tubbo says when Switzerland starts playing. "Boys do cry."

Tommy rolls his eyes, flips him off. "I know that fucker but I'm an emotionally repressed child assassin."

Phil chokes on his drink. Wilbur starts laughing.

"Damn, Tommy," Techno mutters. "Say it how it is."

When Norway comes on, they're all laughing by the end of it, singing the lyrics as loud as they can. The beat, the yellow theme, the wolf heads, the overall vibe.

It's so funny but so worth it.

“Give That Wolf A Banana is my favourite,” Tommy whispers.

“Are they-“ Ranboo chokes out. “Did he-“

“Yep!” Tubbo laughs. “Grandma supposedly tastes the best!”

“I’m fucking crying,” Wilbur hisses out, and yes, there are tears in his eyes.

It’s chaos and even Phil is staring at the screen with wild eyes.

“Hey, Phil,” Techno drawls. “Remember when your people used to be bloodthirsty warriors?”

It starts Wilbur wheezing again and Tommy can’t stop smiling.

Italy has someone that Ranboo knows. “The Soldi guy! From like... a couple years back!”

He grabs his phone and plays it for Tommy, who listens to it and frowns. Despite the beat and clapping, it’s very sad.

“That’s fucking depressing, man.”

“But a banger,” Wilbur says.

When Ukraine comes on, Tommy grins. A familiar language to him, a strange nostalgic feeling filling his bones. Russia isn’t in it this year but Tommy doesn’t care.

Not when he can hear the familiar sound of music he remembers hearing during some missions. The song is an ode to a mother and Tommy can’t help but think of the woman that gave her life to try and give him freedom.

“Oh my god, a breakdancing rug,” Tubbo whispers, creating more laughs but Tommy can’t look away.

He doesn’t have a mother anymore and Russia is a strange place to feel nostalgic about. It was never his home, not really. A birth place, yes. A home, definitely not.

But he can’t help but long for what could’ve been.

“Hey, mate,” Phil breathes. “Are you okay?”

Tommy snuffles and nods, shakily. “I want them to win.”

They don’t ask.

They don’t have to.

Not when Tommy quietly translates to them.

When Lithuania starts, Ranboo is the one to say, “Isn’t that Vector from Despicable Me?”

Techno starts hacking up a lung. Wilbur snorts. “A bowl cut?” He asks, rhetorically. “What world do we live in.”

When Greece starts, Tommy can’t help but blink at the screen. Wilbur looks enthralled. Techno has his head tilted.

“Greece really told the rest of us to die, huh?” He asks.

“What a threatening message in such a soft voice,” Phil comments.

Iceland stumps Tommy, mostly because he’s not totally fluent.

And then Moldova comes on.

Wilbur grabs their hands and pulls them up, immediately dancing. Techno is once again headbanging and Tubbo and Ranboo are linking arms spinning each other around.

“What the fuck is this song about?” Wilbur shouts.

“Trains!” Tommy shouts back.

“Fuck yes!”

Phil is laughing so hard he’s crying and Tommy can’t stop smiling.

Australia’s is emotional and heartfelt and from the high of Moldova, hearing the lyrics makes Tommy’s chest hurt.

He’s not the same either.

He’s changed so much in such a short amount of time. Going from Theseus, from a child assassin, to fighting with all he has to go against what he was taught.

Theseus, to Tommy, to a someone less controlled and more angry.

The Room tried to break him but Tommy is made of marble. He is unbreakable.

The United Kingdom’s song is actually good. They actually might have a chance this year.

“Tommy,” Tubbo says. “Have you ever thought of going to space?”

Tommy chokes. “What the fuck?”

“We’ve nearly conquered all of the governments,” Techno adds. “I’m down for fighting aliens.”

“Jesus Christ,” Phil hisses and Wilbur grins.

“We’ll fight them too.”

Serbia’s song has them all staring.

“Uh, Toms?”

“It’s about health,” Tommy replies. “The healthcare system there is... yeah.”

“Huh,” Wilbur says.

After that, they watch the Mika performance and Tommy smiles even if he doesn’t know these songs. It’s a fantastic performance and in no time, the results are drawing in.

Everyone starts betting but Tommy stays true. “I want Ukraine to win.”

And as the votes pour in, they’re all pleasantly surprised by the UK’s performance but Tommy is only watching Ukraine.

Sure enough, Ukraine wins and Tommy can’t help but smile.

One day, he thinks, the hurt of his past will be nothing more than the way scar tissue can act up. More an itch than an ache.

He thinks of Mika’s song, Happy Ending. Tommy was left like this, a weapon, a machine, a spider. He had no love, no hope, just glory in Soviet Supremacy.

Tommy has love, has hope, has glory. He thinks of those he has lost to get here and understands that his love may be forever, but he will live his life without them.

Eryn, Hannah, Toast. All of the boys in his class. All of the recruits in graves. All of the agents lost to missions, to their own hands.

But this is a happy ending.

Not a perfect one.

But a good one.

Chapter End Notes

All I have left is the epilogue and I’m not crying you are :’)

It’s been amazing writing this series and I’m so glad I did. Thank you all for being here with me!! <3

Epilogue

Chapter Notes

We've made it! I'm not crying you are! :')

TW// the usual, you know the drill by now

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

In the forest beside L'Manberg, there's a meadow nestled between the trees. Wildflowers and a stream near by. Birds talking to one another and butterflies bustling about while cows graze in the sunlight.

Tommy didn't mean to make it.

But the day his godliness settled, two years after the Department had collapsed, flowers spread beneath his feet as he took in his first breath as the God of Life. Golden eyes and flames for wings, an unnatural, strange glow to his skin. Hannah and Eryn, forever with him, never forgotten.

Three years on, Tommy stands with his hands touching the wildflowers, sharp eyes watching Tubbo and Ranboo climb the trees, trying to beat each other to the top. The sun is warm on his skin, the wind ruffling his golden hair.

Somewhere to his left, he can hear the occasional bang of a bullet leaving the chamber as George and Dream shoot cans off a fallen tree. Sapnap commentates from where he's lying in Karl's lap, hand locked with Quackity as he scrolls through his phone.

On Tommy's thumb, a ring sits, a ring that his brothers all share. They've seen the end of the line and they've kept going.

Corpse sits with Ethan, ribs firmly on display while Mark and Sean debate video ideas. The fact Sean is now fighting with Mark on views is both surprising and not. He's funny and with Grey to sooth some of his erratic and impulsive ways, he easily draws attention.

Next to them, Sam and Ponk sit together, with Ponk trying to put as many flowers in Sam's hair without him noticing. If Sam's soft look is anything to go by, he's noticed and is simply indulging him.

Punz, Purpled, Sykunno and Charlie are playing cards beside them and despite Purpled looking more interested in Dream and George shooting, he's somehow winning.

Brooke, Rae, Leslie and Grian watch as Minx and Wilbur spar, while Tina and Techno keep trying to bend the others blood. Jack is speaking to Niki, while she has Puffy's head in her lap, both looking between the fights and Drista, who is talking to Shroud. Tommy wants to be shocked about their sudden friendship - and the fact that Michael is normally within a few metres of them, being followed by a protective Hive - but they're both chaotic now that Shroud knows he won't be punished for it.

Behind him, Phil and Kristin have their heads together, talking quietly between each other. They're both smiling wide, absolutely fixated on one another.

Tommy stands in the forest of his creation and feels at peace. Drista and the recruits have grown and aged, along with Sam, Ponk, Grian and Puffy. The children are becoming adults and the adults are sporting more wrinkles.

The rest of them are unchanged, frozen in time. Tommy has grown an inch, and Ranboo's hair is longer and Tubbo has put on more muscle but that's it.

The oldest they look is nineteen.

They should be in their mid-twenties at this point.

It sometimes scares him. He still has his nightmares, still needs to curl around his brothers to be able to sleep. Because he sometimes still sees the monster beneath his skin.

The weapon. The machine. The spider.

Twenty-eight to one.

But Tommy has grown, matured, healed. His sharp edges have softened, worn with time and affection.

He is a God but he accepts that. He accepts he can't go back and change things, can't do them differently. He was a child assassin but the Red Room is gone, so is the Department. Any murmurs are quickly stamped out into silence.

S.H.I.E.L.D. hovers at the Syndicate's shoulder but L'Manberg, after the Heroes fell, is controlled by them, under their thumb. Their crime rate is low and their population happy. Tommy thinks these days, L'Manberg is like Gotham, a fake city in the comic books Tubbo gives him. Filled with Villains but not falling apart.

A whistle interrupts his thoughts and he looks up to find his brothers watching him. "Everything okay, little brother?" Dream asks and Tommy scoffs.

No more trigger phrases, only love. Blatant and open and unwavering.

"I'm a big man, of course I'm okay."

He gets multiple eye rolls and can't help but smile wider.

The woman is no more. Eret is dead. Mr. Cicle is gone. Billiam is dead. Dreykov is dead. Madame is gone. Tommy only got to speak to his biological father once. He never knew his mother.

But he has a biological brother making flower crowns, two younger brothers throwing apples at each other, three brothers who would go to Hell and back for him, two older brothers who keep fighting for him, and a dad and a mum who would give Tommy the world if he asked for it. It's messy and chaotic and difficult. They're all a little broken, a little bruised.

But Tommy no longer wishes for the relief of death. He doesn't have to. He's free. Free from those who wish to use him, wish to hurt him.

He'll always be Theseus. He occasionally picks up jobs from Quackity. He goes out when he can't sleep with Niki. And if he hears any whispers, he picks up his gear and goes hunting.

Because Tommy is the Huntsman Spider.

He always will be.

But his ledger of red seems lighter, less of a burden to carry and more of an acknowledgment of what he's lived through.

So standing in a forest he created - wildflowers and big trees, cows that lumber over to greet him, a stream of colourful fish and an energy of peace that reminds him more of his limbo than the overall look of it - Tommy is content.

Once upon a time, a woman with hair as black as the abyss and eyes like shining stars told him he was her best creation. Once upon a time, Theseus was but a spider, terrified of himself as much as he was terrified of the world. Once upon a time, there was only fear and the need to survive.

Theseus is something from a rumour, from a whisper, from a fairytale. A Huntsman Spider, waiting in a web, ready to strike and chase and kill.

Tommy is only a boy. A boy with a broom, destroying those webs and stopping the spiders from creating more. A boy that looks across his family and smiles because this is more of a miracle, more of a dream than whatever he could possibly hope for.

Once upon a time, a spider was born into a web, destined to destroy. He grew his legs out, learnt to bite and bleed, spun glorious webs of silk. When he was old enough to fall or fly, he took a leap, growing wings and decided to burn down the web that created him. He fought monsters and found friends and lost allies. When the monsters were gone and the friends became family, he went home, and lived happily ever after.

This fic series started because I watched the Black Widow movie and messaged a friend going: Am I thinking of linking Black Widow and the DSMP? Yes. Yes I am. And that friend proceeded to indulge me and go: Do it.

To me, it was a niche thing, an idea linking my two favourite things together. And then this fic series blew up and I created a discord and now have a little community I adore with my heart.

I want to thank all of you, whether you're just a casual reader or someone who speaks to me daily. I have loved writing this series, all the crack and angst and fluff, and I'm so glad you're here with me, enjoying it.

So thank you! <3

End Notes

My discord:

<https://discord.gg/qTWq34FF2a>

My Tumblr: @spookyserpent

My Twitter: @spooky_serpent

If you want to make art or write something based on this fic you have full permission to do it!

Your comments, kudos and interactions are very welcome!

Take care of yourselves!! <3

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!